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Summer 1996

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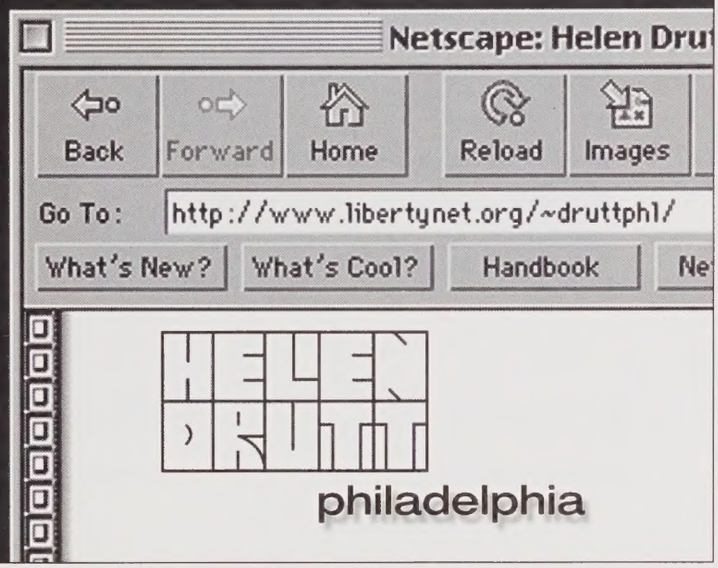

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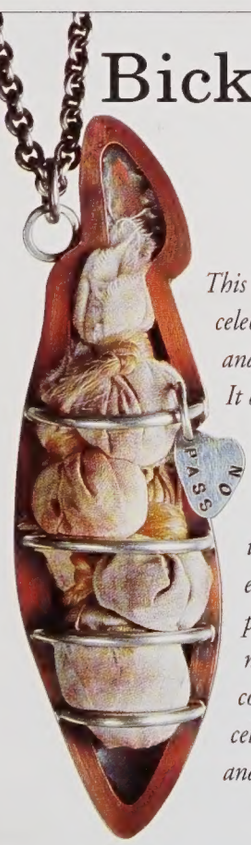

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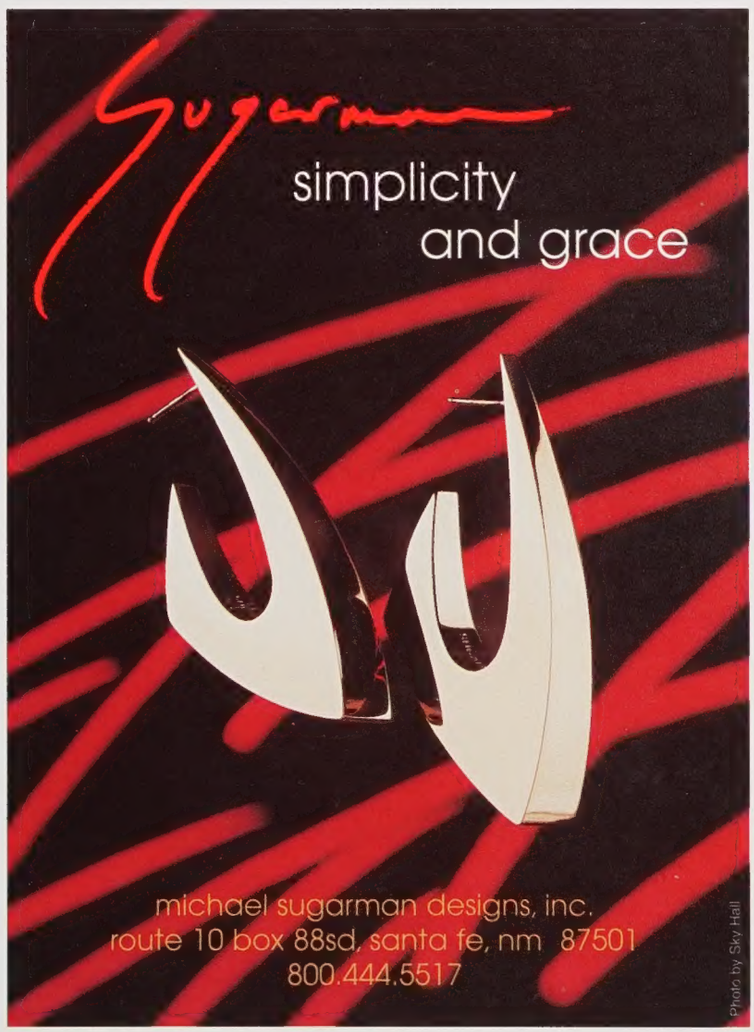

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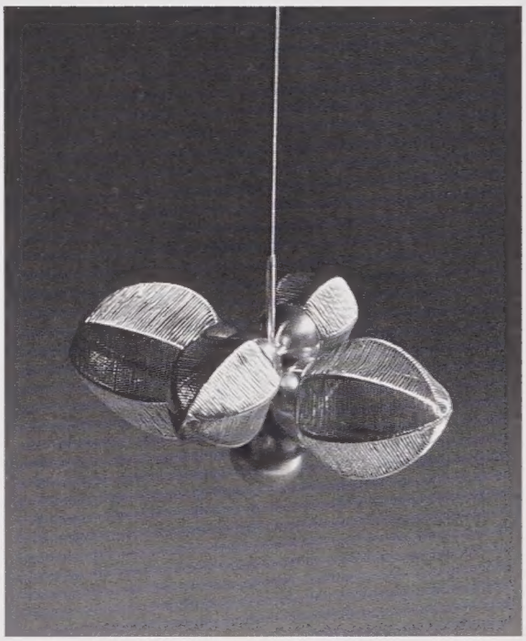

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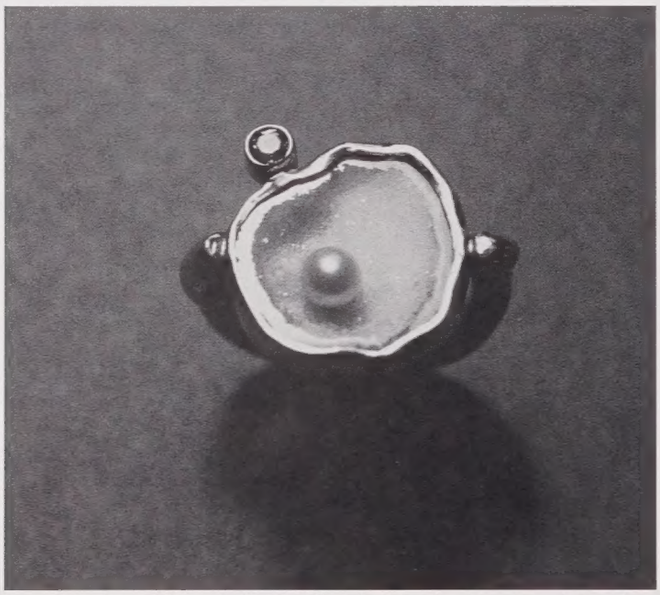

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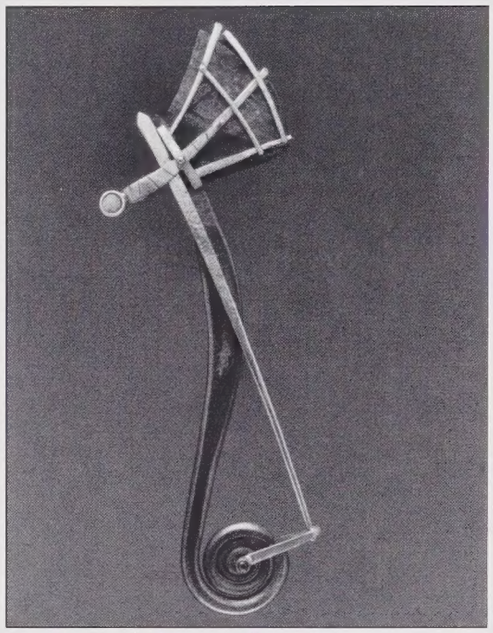

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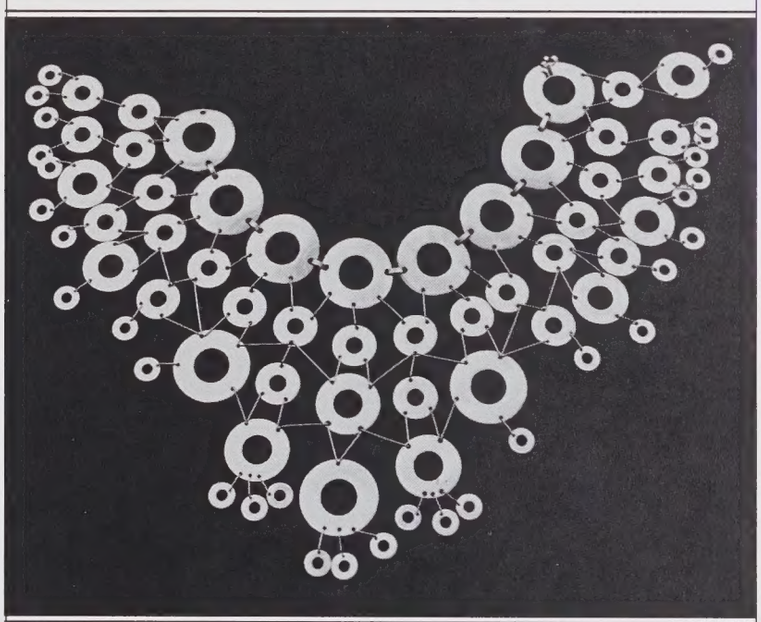

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Editorial

Once again, I had the opportunity to sit in on the jurying for *Metalsmith*'s juried edition of the Exhibition in Print. I consider my presence there as a significant privilege, not in the sense that I am allowed to attend, (afterall its a part of my job) but privilege in the sense that I am always aware of what a rare opportunity I have during this process. While the jurors are charged with picking what they consider to be the best of the entries, and their selections will, of course, be questioned, lauded, and criticized in the public arena, all I have to do is to sit back and look without any responsibilities to analyze or to have to be called to account for my opinions.

The freedom that such a situation allows is a heady one. When some works appeared on the screens I could indulge my most irrational whims. I could like something and respond to it or I could equally dismiss it in an instant as *schlock* and I never had to share or reveal such assessments. I could love a particular form and detest the materials of a piece or I could admire the idea behind a piece while lamenting the artist's lack of skill in carrying the idea through to a successful resolution. As selfish as this may sound to some, it is a healthy exercise because it allows me to confront and indulge my prejudices and the vagaries of my personal taste without actually impacting anyone's career.

In my role as Editor I seek to be fair, impartial, and rigorously and assiduously conscious of the field and all of its practitioners, theories, attitudes, histories, and motivations. Sometimes this self conscious and enforced fairness causes me to subdue some of the passion that I believe motivates all of us involved in the arts. In seeking such reasoned impartiality (something that I believe is extremely important to both my moral and historical responsibilities as an editor) I feel that I must suppress an important part of who I am. After too much of that I sometimes end up feeling like the political candidate that many of us end up voting for: *none of the above.*

Getting back in touch with the pompous, opinionated, judgmental, self absorbed, and arbitrary side of my personality is like an intellectual emetic. It reminds me of my potential for mistakes, while at the same time reminding me of the passion which makes the job much more than a paycheck. Granted I would prefer to be exposing myself to the actual works rather than slides, but the images can still serve as both a catalyst for new thinking and as a check on the isolation that both the studio and the writer's desk often imposes.

The value of such an exercise is one that I hope every reader experiences with every issue of this magazine. I hope that we can all be pleased, shocked, affirmed, and challenged by the variety of objects pictured herein. But I also hope that after that intial passion we all attempt to place the works discussed into the important aesthetic, historical, and cultural contexts which make the field so wonderfully confusing and joyous.

FCL

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Cover
Tone Vigeland
Three Necklaces, 1967
silver, 2⅜" dia., 18⅞" length
Collections:
front and middle, Private Collection;
back, Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, Norway
Photograph: Dan Young/Courtesy AFA
See page 14

Above
Marilyn Druin
Goblet
cloisonné enamel
Photograph: Bob Barrett
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Letters

Dear Editor:

For the sake of accuracy, I would like to make the following corrections to the article on Ellensburg funk by Matthew Kangas (Fall 1995, Vol. 15, Number 4).

1) Ken Cory was born in 1943 not 1944.

2) Footnote #4: Jeanette Papadopoulos does not belong in this list. Although she taught metalsmithing and jewelry at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, part time, from September 1967 through August 1978, she was not part of the funk movement at that time. If the author meant instead to list Chris Papadopoulos, a sculptor teaching at C.W.U. from 1966 to the present, his work at that time was also far from funk.

3) Don Tompkins came to Ellensburg to teach at C.W.U. in September 1966. He was on leave working on his doctorate in New York City from September 1969 until he officially resigned in December 1971. During those two years he returned to teach intermittently. Mike Whitley, primarily a glass-blower, and Jeanette Papadopoulos taught the metals and jewelry classes from September 1969 through December 1971. Ken Cory came in January 1972.

Jeanette Housner
(formerly Papadopoulos)

Dear Editor:

On behalf of myself and the Art Faculty of Central Washington University, I would like to express thanks for the fine article that appeared in the Fall issue of *Metalsmith* (Ellensburg Funky).

At a time when academic crafts programs are under budgetary and ideologic pressures, it is heartening to see our accomplishments noted.

We are proud of the four generations of nationally and internationally recognized metalsmiths that have taught here at Central Washington University (Ramona Solberg, Don Thompkins, Ken Cory and, currently, Keith Lewis) and appreciate the focus that your coverage directed to our faculty, our program and our students.

Michael Chinn, Chair

Randall Gunther 1948 – 1996

Distinguished member Randall Gunther untimely passed away at his home in San Antonio, New Mexico, February 17, 1996.

At the time of his death Randall had completed ten years of teaching most of the fine arts courses at New Mexico Tech in Soccoro, New Mexico.

Randall was educated at the Northern Illinois University, De Kalb with a BFA, a MFA from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, under Fred Fenster, and post graduate work in Denmark and Austria.

He divided his time between teaching, artwork, and the out of doors. Before coming to New Mexico Tech he taught at the Wichita Art Association, Alamo Navajo Indian Reservation, South Mountain Community College in Phoenix, Humber College in Toronto, Canada, and the Mohave Community College in Lake Havasu, Arizona.

Always ready to try uncharted territory in the metal arts, Randall worked continuously with diverse techniques and materials such as titanium and other refractive metals.

He will be remembered for his unique sense of humor, his enthusiasm for his students' and other artists' and teachers' work, and his love and respect for nature.

Harold O'Conner, Distinguished Member, SNAG

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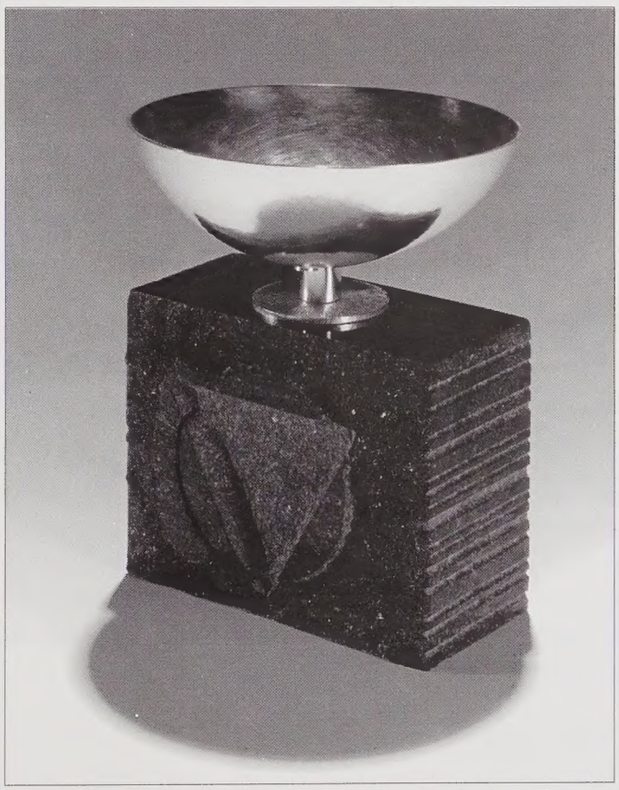

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A View from the Production Bench

Catherine Butler

The loudspeaker blares: "Ladies and gentleman, in this corner, we have BIG ART JEWELRY!" With huge armlets keeping his arms akimbo, sweating meaning and ideas, BIG ART turns to reveal his breastplate emblazoned with *I Am Jewelry, I Really Am* to the thunderous applause of those in the know.

"And in that corner, striking a classic pose, the traditional, the decorative, BOURGEOIS BIJOU!" Those with money cheer wildly as B.B. displays his diamond studded fingers and tasteful single pearl earrings. The bell rings for yet another round in this never-ending dispute...

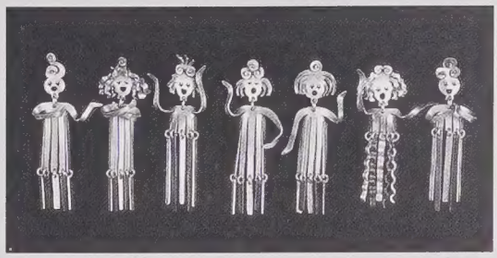
While these two duke it out, I would like to address a portion of the vast playing field that falls between them. I tire of a polarization of our field that is not helpful. Both art jewelry and (for lack of a better term) accent jewelry have their place in the pantheon. The makers of big art jewelry should acknowledge that decoration itself can have significance, meaning, and importance. They need to admit that their own work is aimed at the jewelry cognoscenti, and stop lamenting, that the average person will not forego wearing a coat in January to accommodate their work. The school of jewelry as accent needs to concede that jewelry can be forthright in making a statement, and that even jewelry which is not suitable for everyone and every occasion is still jewelry and has value.

Although we live in a culture that craves spectacle, very few people have the panache to pull off wearing performance style jewelry. The very fact that people wear our work gives it a power not available to the other arts. Even seemingly innocuous jewelry reveals something about the person wearing it. This can be subtle or blatant; the message can be in the jewelry itself or in the manner in which it is worn. We risk creating a vacuum for ourselves if we cling to arguing that the only work of consequence in our field is that which pushes the boundaries of wearability. Jewelry has at its core other issues too: beauty, remembrance, group identification, self-expression, status, and fashion come to mind. In our heterogeneous society, how each of us deals with these issues keeps our field exciting. Pigeonholing ourselves keeps us from a wider, more interesting discussion.

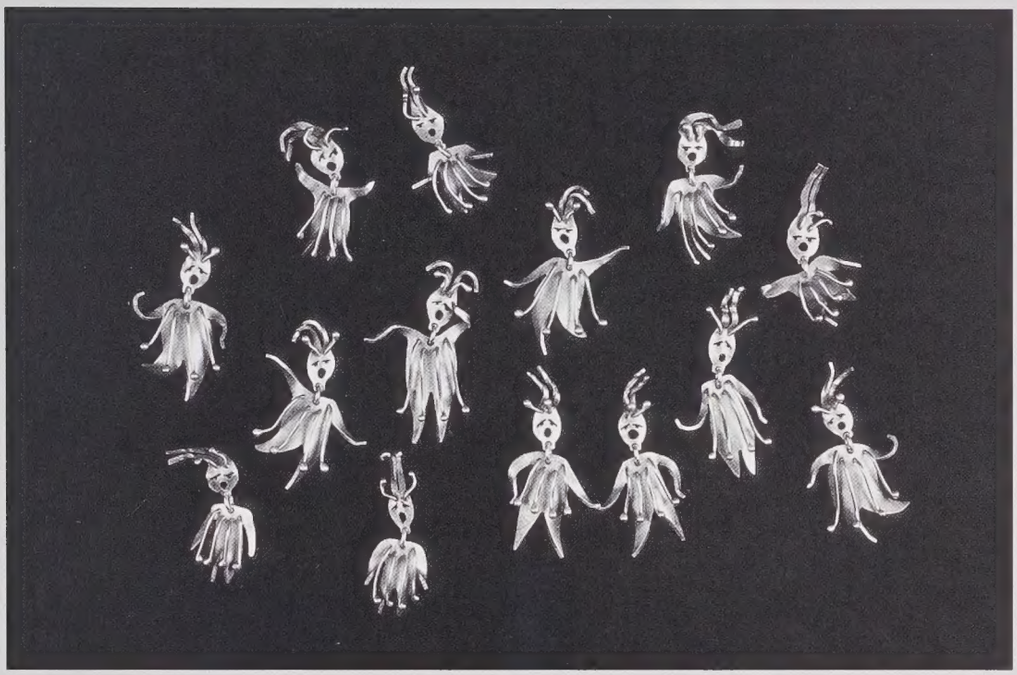
It is vital that we educate the public at large to the relevance of both the decorative and fine arts, in order to counteract the numbing sameness of homogenized *mall culture*. The decorative arts have an advantage in this task as it, especially jewelry, can play such a familiar and intimate part in people's daily lives. We are fortunate to be jewelers. It is a calling with deep prehistoric roots. In an era when many people are losing their jobs to technology and downsizing, we still have ours. The human need for jewelry is not about to disappear. Jewelry is used for gifts, as awards, to show affection, and to mark milestones in people's lives: birthdays, engagements, weddings, anniversaries, and retirements. Some of those pieces are subsequently handed down as family heirlooms. It is an honor to be able to fill these human needs in such an extraordinary way. Our task as jewelers is to tap into these needs of individuals, to exceed their expectations and to cultivate audiences for our work.

Production work often seems to be left out of the jewelry dialogue entirely, unless it is being sneered at as being merely mercenary repetition. I would like to argue that good production work not only fills a need for affordable jewelry, but it can also provide an entryway to the public's understanding of more difficult work. In some ways, because of its affordability, production work can be more subversive and have a greater impact than one-of-a-kind work, simply because it serves as a broader way to reach more people. I do not think this in any way diminishes the power or value of one-of-a-kind pieces. I do think they serve different purposes and fill different needs. Doing both production and one-offs myself, I find that my production lines always evolve out of my one-of-a-kinds. It is a challenge to distill the essence of a unique piece into something with a quality that can bear repetition. One of the beauties of running a small production studio is that it is possible to explore so many variations on a given theme. Determining the breadth of repetition requires attention; one needs to use good sense as to when a one-of-a-kind series has run its course. However, by its nature production is repetition. It can be limited from the start like a print edition and numbered accordingly. It can also be left to run its course in the marketplace. Some pieces fizzle in a year or two. Other series may go on for many years. If a goal for making production jewelry is to get it out there into people's lives, and if the work continues to sell, that is a bonus. It is difficult to make a living doing such work. I get angry when small production jewelers are accused of selling out and are put in the same boat with the mass production jewelry outlet stores. It is possible to do production work with integrity and it is a way of making an honest living.

Continued on page 14



Catherine Butler
Caryatids earings
sterling silver, brass, copper
2¼ x ½ x ⅛" each (approx.)



Catherine Butler
Sprites earings
sterling silver
1½ x ¾ x ¼" each (approx.)

Catherine Butler
People earings
copper, brass, nickel silver,
epoxy inlay
1⅞ x 1 x ⅛" each (approx.)

Photographs: Jordan Davis

Continued from page 10

One of the factors leading to my own production lines was economic – both for myself and for those who buy my work. I wanted the satisfaction of making a living and seeing my pieces worn, and I knew people who hungered for jewelry that was both out of the ordinary and affordable. In the past 15 years I have found that there are a lot of these individuals. I have also found in this audience a great need for education. Through residencies in schools, I have worked with students, parents, and teachers, people whose ideas about jewelry come primarily from magazine advertisements, the mall, or perhaps a family heirloom. For the most part, they are fascinated with the idea of an individual conceiving of a piece of jewelry, producing it and making a living in the process. An interesting side note is that once some people know that I make jewelry, they assume that I make all the jewelry I wear. It is enlightening for them to learn, that like other artists, jewelers too, have individual styles and directions. When someone makes a remark about the earrings I'm wearing and I tell them that they were made by another artist or myself, that person is often intrigued. My experiences lead me to believe that people are more receptive to new ideas about jewelry than we often think. I have known both men and women to pierce their ears so they could wear my smallest, simplest earrings. He may go on to buy a pin. She may save up for a pair of one-of-a-kind earrings or a necklace. They may never wear big art jewelry, but eventually they may enjoy seeing it and *thinking* about it.

At times I think the reason that the more dramatic jewelry gets the focus in publications is because it reproduces so stunningly in photographs. Jewelry which functions well as an intimate detail and which may be very much alive on one's clothing or body can be difficult to capture in a photograph. If it is not a glamorous piece, fashion-style photography does not suit it and it seems to be lacking something when photographed on its own. One of the delights offered by jewelry is in noticing it moving with someone's body, when passing by, in conversation, or in more intimate surroundings. Photography, though necessary for documentation in publications and periodicals, does not show the way a piece moves, sounds or interacts with the person wearing it.

In Bali, art is so entwined in daily life, that there is no word for it; art is not seen as something separate and apart. In western civilization, throughout this century, a major artistic pursuit has been to challenge bourgeois values and set art apart from common ideas. As jewelers, we do not need to disadvantage ourselves by making our work less accessible merely to prove a point about our stature as artists. Today, with the marginalization of the arts, the impending disappearance of the middle class, and the creeping chaos of the approaching millennium, the idea of a constant linear progression to new, *better* territory needs to be questioned. We need to reconstruct some stability for an inclusive, civilized society using the best ideas of the past.

Catherine Butler
Feeding the Birds necklace and earings
copper, brass, sterling silver,
epoxy inlay, glass beads
2⅞ x 2½ x ⅛" (large figure)

In our own field, it behooves us to look closely at all that the word jewelry signifies. We need to look at our aversion to the word jeweler in both our critical writing and among ourselves. We should take note that our criticism often discusses issues and aesthetics only as they pertain to the work itself and the maker, but not the wearer or the wearer's needs. Function is usually examined only in terms of wearability, if at all. Jewelry has emotional, spiritual, and sentimental functions too. How contemporary work deals with these uses and needs is left unaddressed. How does our work counteract the banality that the industrial revolution and mass production have engendered, and reach people who want more than what the mall offers but who do not know where to look? These are issues that bear investigation. In our own culture alone, there exists a profusion of views of beauty and desirability, from one who feels elegantly beautiful in diamonds and pearls to one who feels exotically beautiful with multiple piercings; and that is looking only at the beauty aspect of jewelry. A vast arena exists in which we can play. As jewelers we need to look at what jewelry is and can be in people's lives, and encourage the best work in all aspects of our field.

Catherine Butler is a jeweler in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

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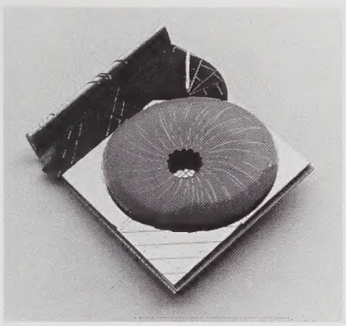
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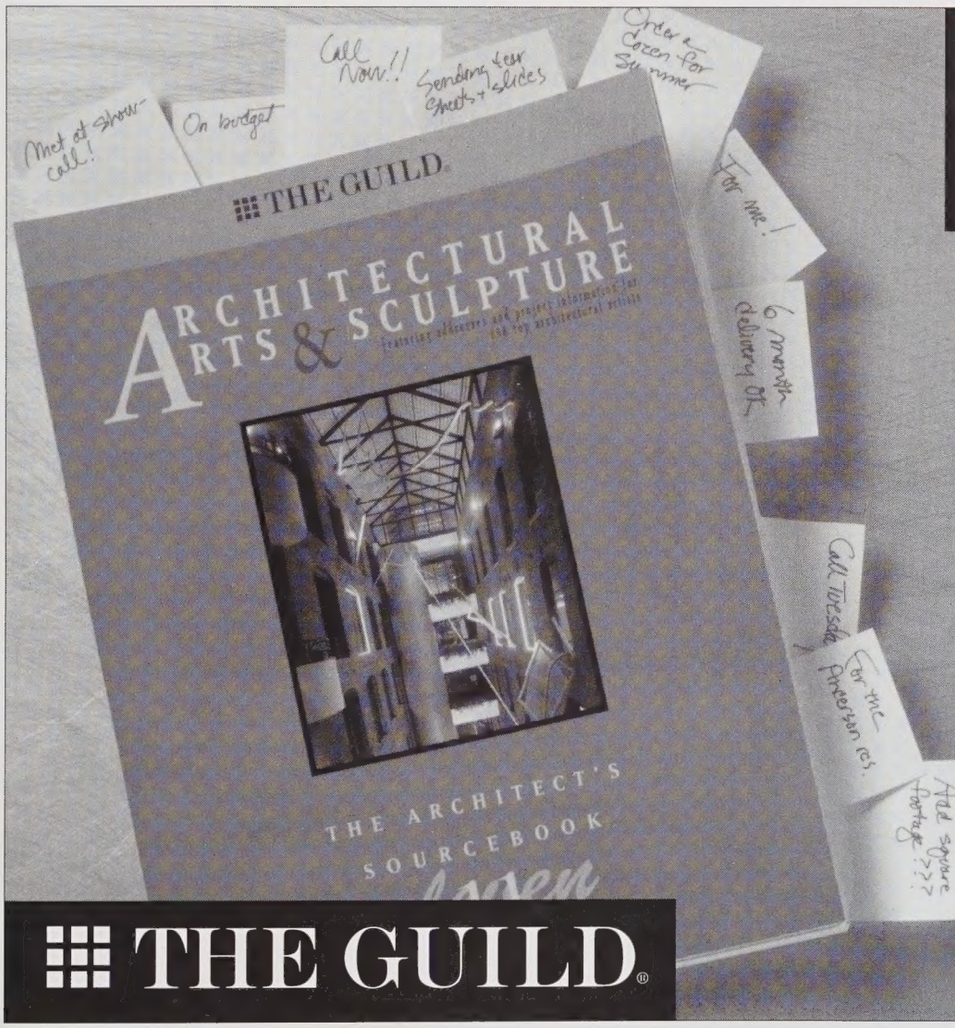

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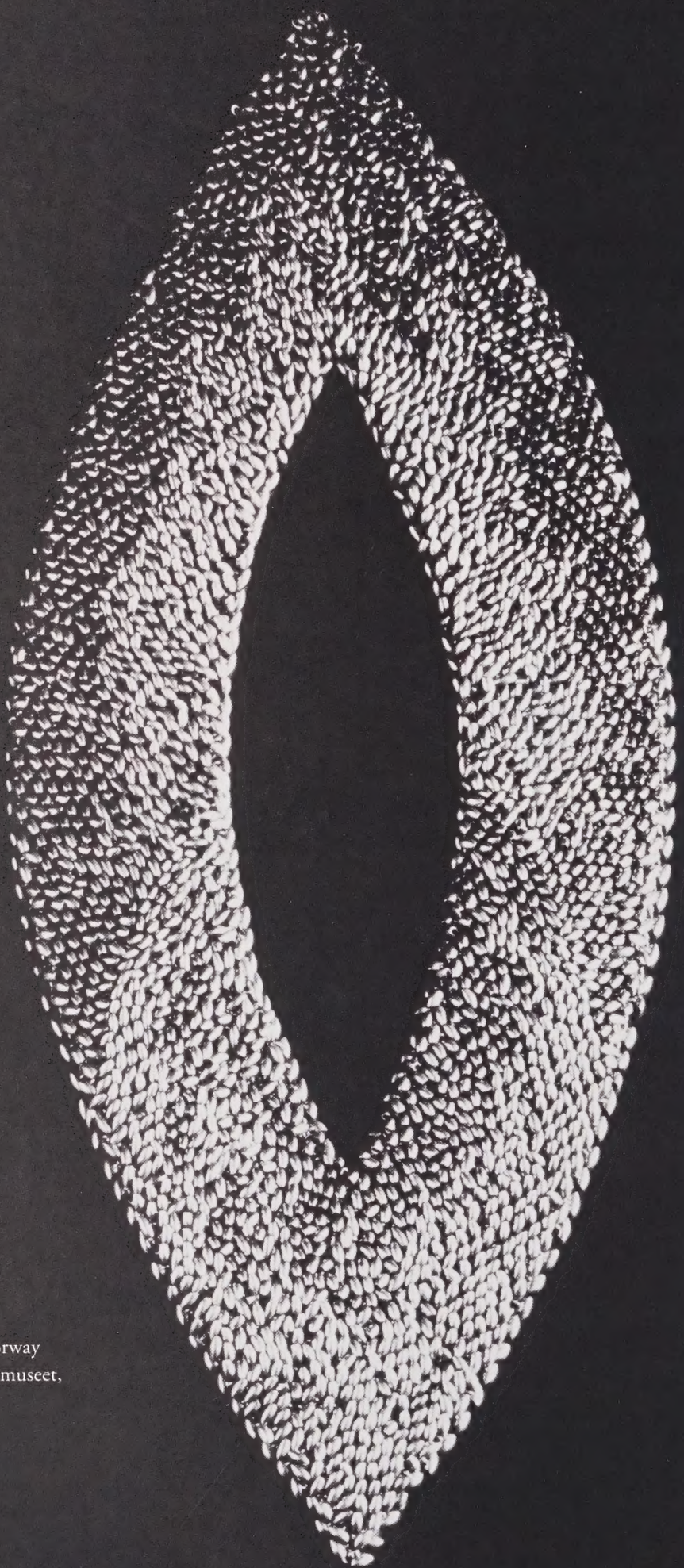


Necklace, 1992
silver, 18 x 7⅕"
Collection: Vestlandske
Kunstindustrimuseet, Bergen, Norway
Photo: Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseet,
Bergen, Norway/AFA

Perfect Paradox

The Jewelry of Tone Vigeland

Text: Toni Greenbaum

Ring, 1967
14k, pearls, 7/8"
Collection of the Artist
Photo: Teigens Fotoatelier AS/Courtesy AFA
Note: Although not identical, this piece is similar in technique to the disassembled suite referred to in the text.

Tone Vigeland's oeuvre is contradiction objectified. Her jewelry is a visual discourse between opposites: large-small, hard-soft, rigid-fluid, tight-loose, inertia-movement, stricture-freedom, compulsion-relaxation. Each piece is a scrupulous amalgam of scale, structure, symmetry, surface, sensuality, and meticulous craftsmanship. She believes her jewelry to be complete only when it interacts with the human body, conforming to its contours and altering in harmony with its movements. And although comfort is a priority, her pieces, nonetheless, often verge on the ceremonial.

Norwegian by birth and residence, Vigeland has absorbed the spirit of a land which produced artistic wonders as diverse as the complex interlacing of ancient Viking metalwork, the moody expressionism of Edvard Munch's paintings, and the technical prowess of Greta Prytz Kittelsen's enamels. Yet, Vigeland has emerged as a maverick, not only at home, but even amongst the international jewelry avant-garde. She belongs to no movement and subscribes to no ideology.

Unit construction forms the basis from which her jewelry emanates, the foundation upon which it is built. And although several other contemporary jewelers, such as Patricia Meyerowitz, Betty Cooke, and Robert Smit often utilize identical, repetitive elements as the components of their necklaces, bracelets, brooches, and earrings, Vigeland opts for increased complexity through textural and kinetic considerations, specifically the tactile and dynamic dimensions possible through the addition of tiny surface attachments. All-in-all, these intricate mini-structural systems are the result of a painstaking evolution which has its roots in the mid-twentieth century and the then prevailing canon of Scandinavian modern design. As David Revere McFadden wrote: "During the 1950s, the *style* [Scandinavian Design] attracted an almost unprecedented following of critics and consumers. The primary virtue ascribed to Scandinavian objects was an overall design excellence, aesthetically and functionally."[1]

Necklace, 1978
silver, 14k, 18k, emeralds,
amethysts, baroque pearls, 18⅛" length
Collection: Vestlandske
Kunstindustrimuseet, Bergen, Norway
Photo: Hans/Jørgen Abel/Courtesy AFA

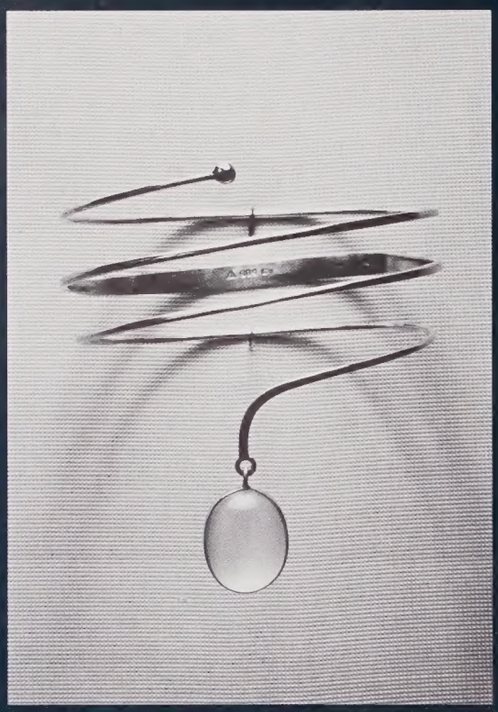
Tone Vigeland was born on August 6, 1938, into a stellar artistic family. Her grandfather Emanuel was a prominent stained glass artist and fresco painter, great-uncle Gustav a famous sculptor, and father Per the creator of large-scale ecclesiastical decorations in stained glass and mosaic tile. Vigeland completed her required education in 1955, after which she attended Statens Håndverks-og Kunstindustriskole (National College of Arts, Crafts, and Design) to study metalsmithing. She had also briefly considered ceramics but ultimately chose metals because of the technical immediacy inherent in forging, piercing, and soldering, etceteras. While there, she took design with Oscar Sørensen and goldsmithing with Sigard Alf Ericksen. In 1957, she applied to Oslo Yrkeskole (The Oslo Vocational School). This four year technical training course in jewelry was mandatory in order to qualify for a journeyman's degree, required for teaching, buying, selling, and even working gold and silver.

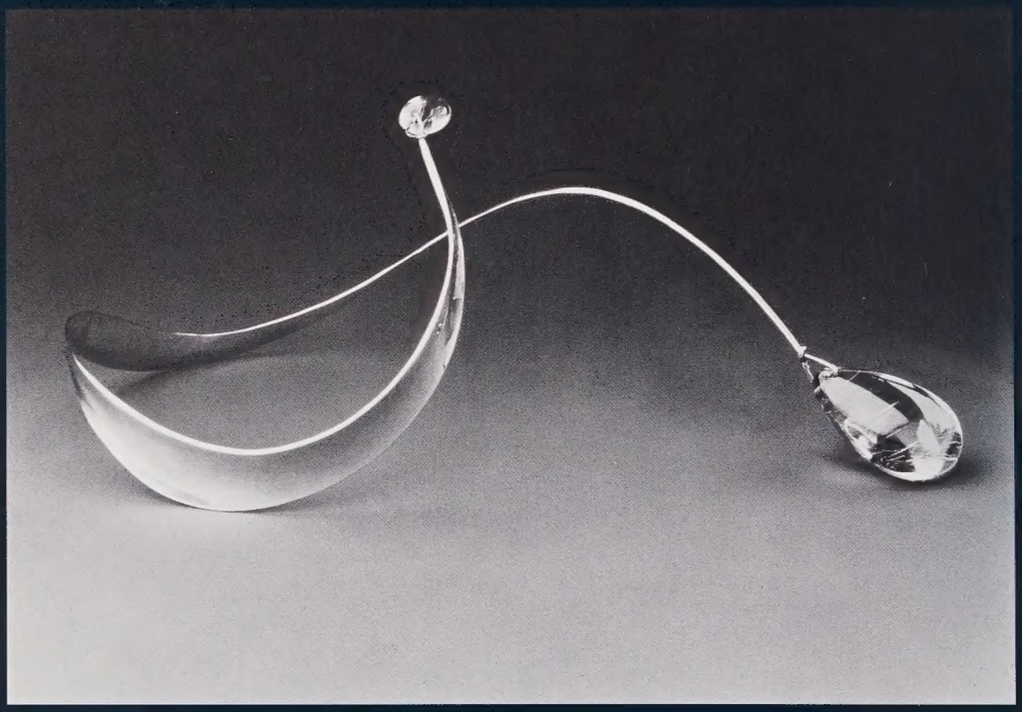
While attending the Oslo Yrkeskole, Vigeland made a pair of screwless silver earrings, based upon earlier experiments in copper and pewter, and inspired by a summer visit to Denmark in 1953 when she was fifteen years of age. At that time, the gracefully undulant jewelry by Henning Koppel figured prominently in the repertory of the venerable Danish firm of Georg Jensen. And the curvaceous necklaces and bracelets by Swedish jeweler Torun Bülow-Hübe (who was to design for Georg Jensen, also, beginning in 1967) had already been exhibited in Norway in 1951. These earrings, by Vigeland, entitled *Sling*, resemble an open numeral *6*; the long top-tail nestles behind the ear while the lower scroll curves inward to hook into the lobe, a brilliant design which eliminates the need for the clumsy appendages usually necessary for wear. Per Tannum, manager of Norway Designs, saw the earrings at a student exhibition and invited Vigeland to apprentice at Plus, an arts and crafts center in Fredrikstad which he founded in 1958, with the purpose of commissioning artists to create original designs for industrial production; needless to say, unpretentious prototypes in silver, clay, fiber, etceteras were meant to elevate commercial standards through aesthetic and technical excellence.

Necklace, 1982
steel, silver, 14k, 18k,
mother-of-pearl, 10⅝ x 11¾"
Collection: Cooper-Hewitt National Design
Museum, Smithsonian Institution,
New York, NY. Purchased with General
Funds and Decorative Arts Funds.
Photo: Cooper-Hewitt/Courtesy AFA

Vigeland worked in the Plus silver workshops, under the direction of Erling Christoffersen, from 1958-61, at which time she received her goldsmith's certificate and started an independent studio in Fredrikstad while continuing to design for Plus on a freelance basis. During these nascent years, she created jewelry stylistically consistent with the rubric of Scandinavian modern jewelry design: clean lines, simple silhouettes, unadorned surfaces, restricted ornamentation, visible technical solutions, and gentle spirals and curves forged to mimic the contours of the human body. To wit, serpentine bracelets coiled around the wrist and tortuous necklaces embraced the throat in a gestural sweep reminiscent of Torun, whom Vigeland gratefully acknowledges. However, although clearly inspired, in her embryonic years, by the Swedish jeweler's body-consciousness, Vigeland diverged significantly as regards symmetry. Whereas Torun emphasized the winding curve, often at the expense of equipoise, balance is of the utmost importance to Vigeland, and, in certain respects, her jewelry may be perceived as an artistic manifestation of the harmony found in nature.

Nordic jewelry had been enthusiastically received by the international design community when it was exhibited at the Milan Triennale in 1957. In Norway, Vigeland was highly regarded by the press as a jeweler for the modern woman and was consequently invited to participate in the Milan Triennale of 1960. Graham Hughes, the prominent British jewelry historian, included Vigeland in the First International Survey of Modern Jewellery 1890-1961, a landmark exhibition presented at Goldsmiths' Hall in London in 1962, a year which turned out to be a watershed, in several respects, for her. While continuing to create jewelry for Plus, as well as independent works, Vigeland won first prize in the Gullsmedforbund (Association of Norwegian Goldsmiths) competition. Also that year, she represented Norway at an exhibition in Tel Aviv and was sent by Plus to Carson Pirie Scott, a Chicago department store, to demonstrate enameling in conjunction with the promotional presentation Spotlight on Scandinavia. Most importantly, it was around this time that Vigeland began to shift her emphasis. She was feeling restricted by the confining aspects of industrial design, as well as by the general craft ethic,

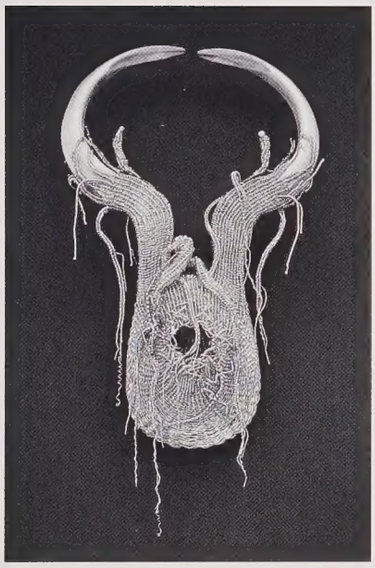




LEFT, TOP
Sling, earrings, 1958
silver, 2⅜ x 1¼"
Collection: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, Norway
Photo: Teigens Fotoatelier AS/Courtesy AFA

BELOW, LEFT
Bracelet/Bangle, 1964
14k, moonstone, 3½" ht., 2⅜" dia.
Collection: Private collection
Photo: Teigens Fotoatelier AS/Courtesy AFA

BELOW, RIGHT
Torun Bülow-Hübe
Necklace, c. 1954-58
silver, rutilated quartz
¾ x 4⅝ x 6"
Collection: Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Montréal, The Liliane & David M. Stewart Collection
Photo: Schecter Lee



Mary Lee Hu
Necklace # 8, 1973
silver, gold-filled brass, boar's tusks, (wrapped, woven), 9 x 3"
Collection of the Artist
Photo: Richard Nicol

of the time, which regarded a handmade article as not much more than simply an *honest object*. She wished to create more meaningful works. As she recently stated: "... crafts are more limited in their ability to convey inspiration. It is as if thoughts are ... frozen within the craft object, while in the fine arts, energies within the work create references, emotions, and thoughts that evolve on a much deeper level and move away from the actual object."[2]

In 1965, Vigeland became the youngest recipient ever awarded the prestigious Jacob Prize from the Landsforengingen Norsk Brukskunst (National Association of Norwegian Applied Arts), and in 1967, another pivotal year for her, she had her first solo exhibition at the Kunstnerns (Artists' House) Oslo, an arena formerly available only to painters and sculptors. In analyzing the jewelry shown there, significant theoretical shifts became apparent. Although some of the jewelry was still clearly influenced by Torun, much displayed a good deal of color, due to the presence of stones and enamel – even the technically-demanding *plique-à-jour*. However, the most innovative pieces were three optically-challenging openwork medallions, each created from two circles of silver sheet, pierced in repetitive linear patterns and then placed in overlapping juxtaposition to one another and, even more momentously, a set, comprised of a combination necklace/earrings and *hand piece*. This suite, now disassembled, was fabricated from small gold wire rings, linked together to form a kind of mesh with pearls, and amethysts. Clearly, Vigeland was referencing East Indian jewelry, a style which had always captivated her, and was thereafter to inform her entire body of work. Marking a clean break with her prior focus, Vigeland now sought flexibility. From early in the 1970s, she was to concentrate on pieces that draped on the body.

Consistent with the general defection from machine production and a concurrent desire for new expression in the applied arts, Norway began to embrace certain styles, from around the world, which were clearly *on the cutting-edge*. Among other trends, the 1970s heralded a revival of the grand scale and organic curves seen in Art Nouveau. In the United States, this fashion was exemplified by Albert Paley's jewelry. In another vein, Norwegian goldsmith Christian Gaudernack returned home, in 1971, after studying with the masters in Pforzheim, Germany. He brought with him progressive ideas concerning the application of acrylics, iron, tin, and steel to jewelry. Furthermore, Gaudernack admonished Vigeland to pay more attention to surface, a notion which would henceforth go hand-in-hand with her research into the nature of pliancy.

At this time, the Netherlands, as well, was undergoing a good deal of turbulence in its jewelry community. Another novel and exceedingly influential ideology was germinating there, which ran completely counter to Vigeland's emphasis on fluidity. This was epitomized by the industrially-inspired, massively rigid body sculptures, collars, and face pieces by Gijs Bakker and Emmy Van Leersum. Their jewelry was "... intimidating, refusing to become integrated with the wearer."[3] Vigeland believed, on the contrary, that jewelry should be comfortable; function, remember, being one of the benchmarks of modern Scandinavian design.

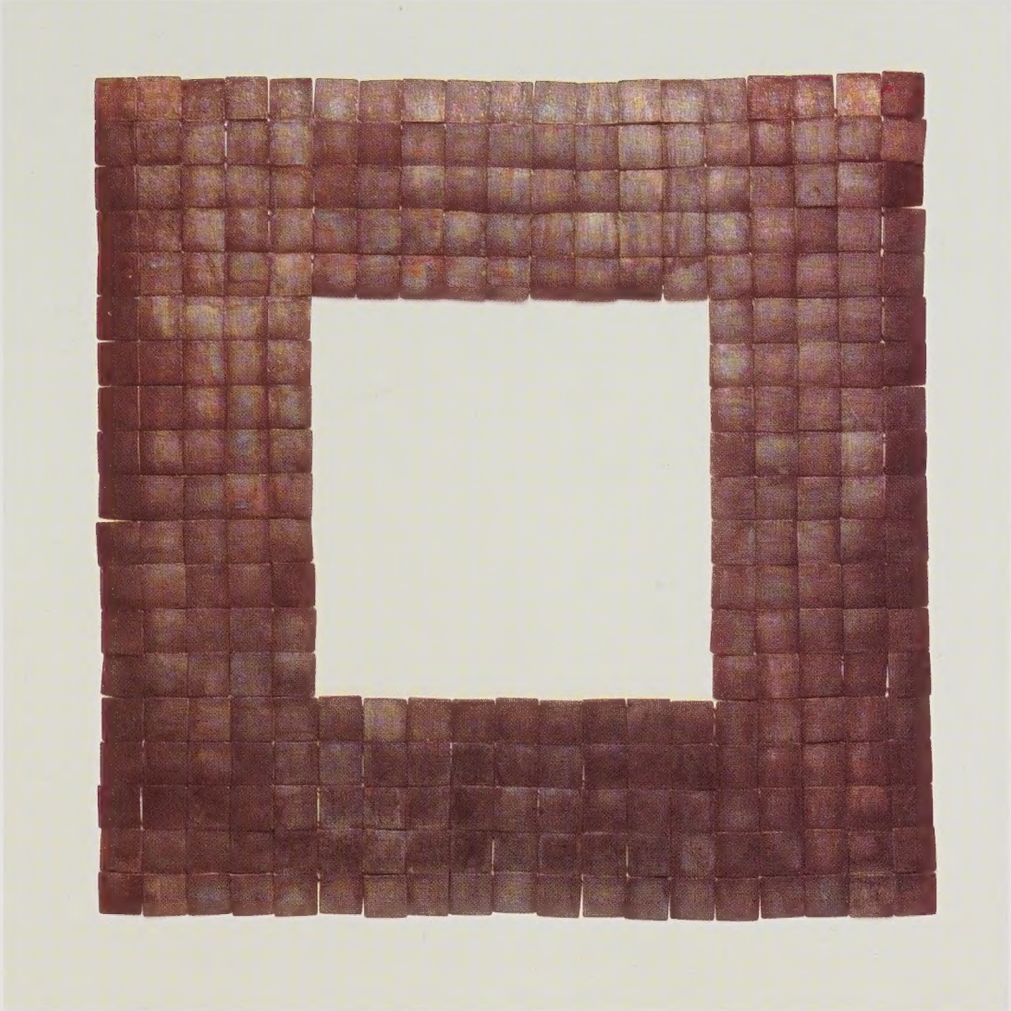
Simultaneously, in the United States, however, a like-minded contingent of jewelers were actively engaged in methods which were sympathetic to Vigeland's mode. Arline Fisch and Mary Lee Hu, for example, were exploring the application of textile techniques to metal wire. Still, neither knitting, crocheting, plaiting, nor braiding afforded the structural mobility which Vigeland required. Therefore, in 1973, she embarked upon her first significant experiments into the nature of flexibility: pliable bracelets and necklaces constructed from silver hemispheres threaded on a chain. These endeavors led to larger pieces, assembled from chains of small tubular silver bits, varied occasionally by the addition of enamel, stones, gold, and gold and silver in combination. Vigeland also returned attentively to studying the intricate wire joinery practiced by East Indian jewelers, a technique she alluded to previously, in 1967.

Necklace/Belt, 1986
silver, 47¼ x 1"
Collection: Fonds national d'art contemporain, Ministére de la Culture et de la Francophonie, Paris
Photo: Hans-Jørgen Abel/Courtesy AFA

Vigeland began this journey of discovery by connecting small silver rings to create various types of mesh which recalled both chain mail and lace work. The first pieces made by this technique were large collar-like necklaces of oxidized silver, in which the mesh was given varied structures and colors. Gradually, the surface became more complex, richer, and diversified in both texture and hue. This was achieved by concealing the web-like background, in part, behind anchored elements of silver, gold, enamel, and stones.

The first in a series of important one-person exhibitions at the Kunstnerforbundet (Artists' Association) in Oslo occurred in 1978. Emboldened by continued national recognition, in 1979 Vigeland showed her work to Barbara Cartlidge, whose Electrum gallery in London specialized in jewelry by an international array of prominent artists. Cartlidge gave Vigeland a solo exhibition in 1981. Desiring to create something totally new for this show, Vigeland began *playing* with hand-forged nails, from an Empire-style house, which a friend had given to her. She had always been enamored of found objects and proceeded to test the boundaries of these nails; she cleaned, hammered, stretched, bent, gold-inlayed, and polished them. This led her to experiment with other types of tacks, especially the blue-black steel sorts, which when forged acquire a distinctive sheen and flat feather-like shapes. The necklaces assembled with these nails, redolent of Brazilian natural feather collars, also serve to illustrate Vigeland's fascination with a kind of *romantic primitivism*, consistent with much jewelry done in the 1970s. One need only view jewelry from this period by Arline Fisch, Mary Lee Hu, and Robert Lee Morris, to name a few, to recognize the impact of this tribal sensibility.

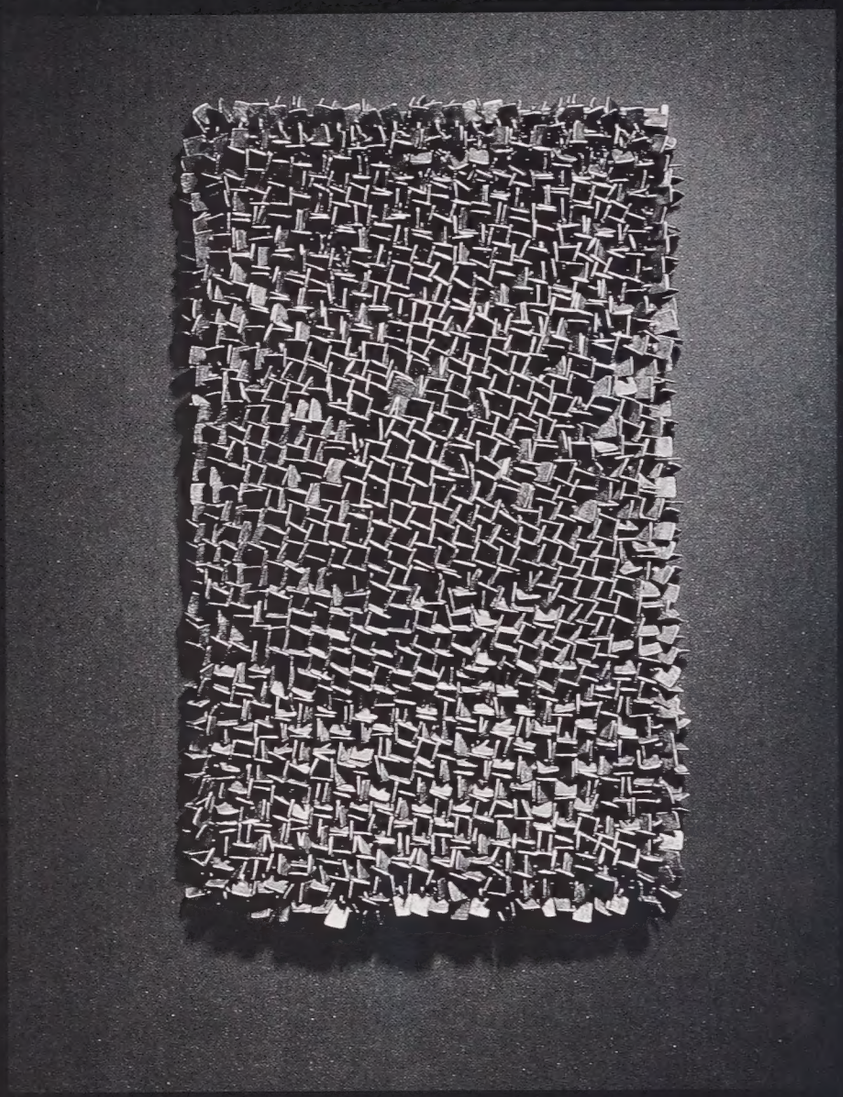
RIGHT
Neckpiece, 1 of 2, 1989
silver, 5½" inner dia., 12⅜" outer dia.
Private Collection:
Courtesy Helen Drutt, Philadelphia
Photo: Hans-Jørgen Abel/Courtesy AFA



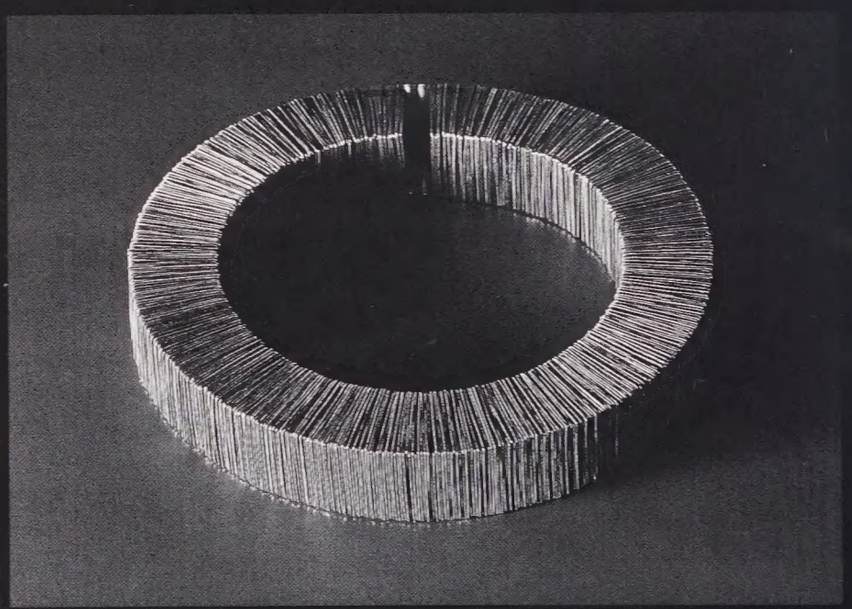
More than solely a kindred spirit, Robert Lee Morris was to play a significant role in introducing Vigeland to the American public. She met him, along with Helen W. Drutt English, owner of Helen Drutt Gallery in Philadelphia, in 1981, when she visited New York to meet with David Revere McFadden, then curator of decorative art at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum. He was organizing the exhibition, Scandinavian Modern Design 1880-1980, a show which was to include pieces by Vigeland. In 1983, Morris gave Vigeland her first solo exhibition in the United States, at his jewelry gallery, Artwear.

By 1986, Vigeland was moving away from steel as her metal of choice; silver became preferred because, due to its mutability, it allows for subtle color variations not possible with steel or iron. Furthermore, silver can be controlled – chemically oxidized to different shades of gray and brown, and it also benefits from the natural patina acquired through use. At this juncture, Vigeland was utilizing silver mesh, like a *stocking*, as a background upon which she attached tiny silver balls in deposits of varying density. Additionally, since shading is of such consequence to her, Vigeland would regulate the amount of reflected light through selective buffing. In tandem with these processes, Vigeland relinquished, as often as was possible, cumbersome fastening apparatuses, thereby creating necklaces, belts, and bracelets which simply twist snake-like around the throat, waist, or wrist, then tuck or tie in place. That same year, she had a one-person exhibition at the Kunstindustrimuseet (Museum of Applied Arts) in Oslo and won second prize in a major jewelry exhibition in Tokyo: The Sixth Tokyo Triennial. In 1987, she was awarded the Oslo City Artist's Prize and in 1988 the Swedish Prince Eugen Medal.

Bracelet, 1991
silver, 7⅛ x 4¼"
Private Collection
Photo: Hans-Jørgen Abel/Courtesy AFA



Necklace, 1995
silver, 4½" inner dia., 6⅝" outer dia.,
18" length
Collection of the Artist
Photo: Guri Dahl/Courtesy AFA



As was her custom, Vigeland wished to do something untried and unique for a solo exhibition, planned for 1989, at the Kunstnerforbundet. The richly appliquéed silver mesh was abandoned in favor of flat or layered constructions composed of contiguous or overlapping silver squares or rectangles, affixed to each other by tiny, invisible rings. The overall effect may suggest a tiled floor, a shingled roof, or possibly the protective shell of an armadillo. And although Vigeland was to briefly back away from this direction, she would ultimately return to it, albeit in a different format; and it furthermore becomes apparent that these geometric works suggested to her the *meshless* pieces from 1991 and 1992.

During those years, she fabricated necklaces, bracelets, and caps which utilized minute squares or rectangles as surface elements but did not use the mesh *stocking* as a core. Instead, through an intricate mathematical procedure, she invented a unified formal apparatus consisting of identical hard-edge but mobile bits on a stiff, segmented background. Nevertheless, at the time of her solo exhibition at the Kunstnerforbundet in 1993, Vigeland, at least in certain pieces, temporarily returned to surfaces covered completely with a course, even nap – a carpet, really, of tiny *seeds* or motile granulation.

However, Vigeland's most recent jewelry has reverted to the idiom displayed by the flat, modular pieces from around 1989, as well as the hard-edge kinetic works done in 1991 and 1992. What she learned about engineering, at that time, directed her to invent a linking system which allows for the parallel *stacking* of wire-strung silver plate shapes. Hollowed out for lightness, when these squares and rectangles are set on edge and packed tightly together, their borders generate yet another brand of surface – one that is based upon linear properties. This series, in fact, serves to resolve Vigeland's colloquy between structure and surface. As Donna Gustafson wrote: "... these new pieces literally invert the structure of the earlier work so that the metal plates that once served as surface are now both structure and surface."[4]

On the occasion of Tone Vigeland's retrospective, organized jointly by the Kunstindustimuseet and The American Federation of Arts, one naturally reevaluates her contribution to modern jewelry. Certainly, she has garnered critical acclaim, as well as institutional acceptance; her work is represented in many public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art and The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, both in New York, Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Musée des Art Décoratifs in Paris, and the Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo. But where is her place in the history of jewelry? Although critics have habitually found a facile reference to Viking armor in Vigeland's work, both this writer and the artist (although admittedly flattered) find that comparison overly simplistic. True, her use of fixed pod-like spheres may suggest Viking granulation, and any allusion to chain mail will evoke associations with battle array from the Middle Ages. But art is concerned with intent, and Vigeland's purpose diverges radically from being simply a reverent interpretation of medieval costume. Her efforts have produced so much more relevant results. In forty years, she has achieved an oeuvre which is nothing less than a subtle but sublime symbiosis of form, content, materials, process, environment, and function. She is, in fact, far closer to eastern than western philosophy. Her procedure is imbued with the slow, ritual manipulation of infinitesimally replicated parts, combined to create a whole entity. Her connection with nature is manifest in the inspiration derived from "an open landscape, the sea, the mountains, the endless white of winter ... the first snow and the gray rocks on the shoreline"[5], as well as the gradual nuances in color caused by exposure to the elements.

Tone Vigeland's jewelry is peaceful, yet it is also a battle of opposites; it is gentle but simultaneously absorbs the tensions arising out of dichotomy; it is a visual metaphor for life itself; it is the perfect paradox.

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NOTES

[1] David Revere McFadden, "Scandinavian Modern: A Century in Profile", in *Scandinavian Modern Design 1880-1980* (exh. cat. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1982), 12.

[2] Tone Vigeland, interview by Donna Gustafson, October 26-27, 1994, in *The Jewelry of Tone Vigeland, 1958-1995* (Oslo: Oslo Museum of Applied Art, 1995), 10.

[3] Gert Staal, *Gijs Bakker, vormgever, Solo voor een solist* s-Gravenhage, SDU uitgeverij, 1989, 19.

[4] Donna Gustafson, "Tone Vigeland, A Physical Pleasure", *Ornament* 19 (Winter 1995): 45.

[5] Gustafson interview, 14.

Linda MacNeil

A Detailed Look

Text: Karen S. Chambers

ABOVE
Necklace, 1995
goldplated mesh,
blue pâte de verre w/bubble, 20"

RIGHT
Abstract Vessel, 1994
24k plated brass,
acid polished glass,
polished glass, 12 x 10 x 17"
Photo by Bill Truslow

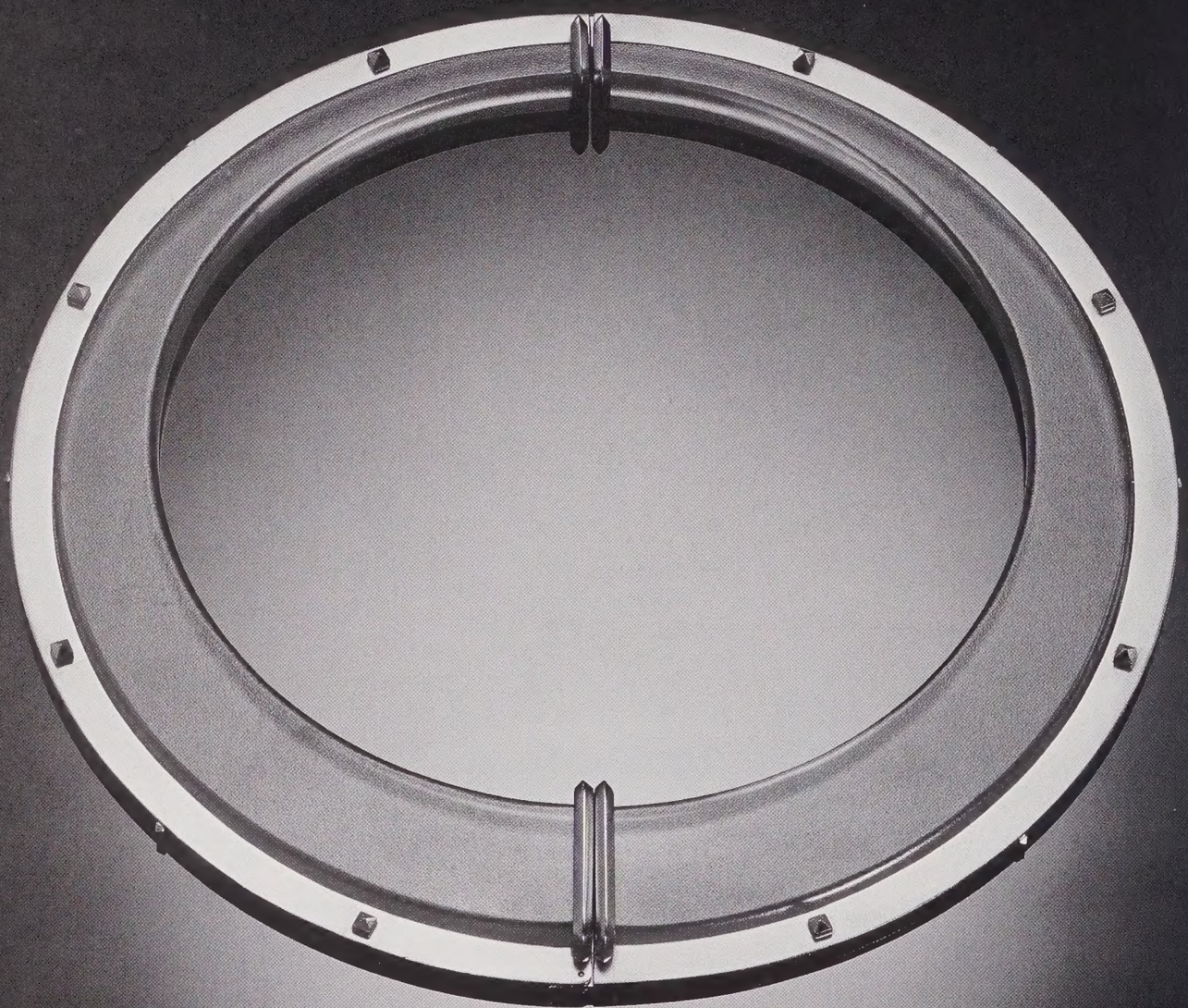
"How do I get inspired? That's one of the hardest questions", muses Linda MacNeil. "I look through art books. I look at everything, try to absorb everything. Details of industrial things – bridges, street lamps, mixing bowls. I like to visit old houses, new houses. I'm constantly looking at details of buildings. Details from all things."[1]

Looking at MacNeil's glass and metal sculpture and jewelry, it is easy to see why that question evokes this answer. In all of her work there is an attention to detail that is obsessive, whether it is expressed in the carefully balanced relationships of individual elements, the sensitive choice of materials and colors, or the fineness of the execution. She takes what she has seen and distills it into a look that is distinctly hers without either brutalizing the source or slavishly imitating it. What happens is what MacNeil, in her unassuming manner, hopes will happen: "It will all gel in my mind and I'll come up with something."

What she comes up with is a distinctive amalgam that may borrow from history, but always with a contemporary take. Done with a precision that is industrial in look, but with a finish of the finest craftsmanship, her works recall Art Deco and the optimistic glories of the Machine Age.

Her sculptures allude to the vessel form, but always in a hard-edged, stylized way that speaks of the modern. As MacNeil explained in a lecture delivered at a Glass Art Society meeting in 1981: "Reflecting our times, I use technology, geometry, simplicity, mechanisms, and methods of fabrication as sources for my ideas. Industrial elements such as plate glass and extruded metals are used to their advantage, and the designs are a reaction to the unique characteristics of these materials."[2]

Her jewelry, while never derivative, clearly acknowledges its ancestors. Her 1984 *Neck Piece* of 14k and glass recalls Lalique's *Parakeets* necklace of the 1930s as each consists of rectilinear elements. MacNeil has simplified hers to their essence but the Art Deco rendition has cast components that look like Chinese seals topped by the popular pet birds. MacNeil, following her strategy of looking at everything, has gone even further back in history for her inspiration. The sleekest and most modern-looking of her jewelry designs could be traced to 1700 BC. The gently elliptical form of a 1988 *Neck Collar* of 24k-plated brass with gold-toned translucent glass brings to mind a *lunula*, the oldest form of self-adornment from Bronze Age Ireland. Jewelry historian J. Anderson Black considers such artifacts unlikely to have been worn[3], but MacNeil's collar is eminently wearable. For her, "jewelry has to be really practical. I really try to have it fit well, work, last".



Neck Collar, 1988
24k plated brass, acid etched yellow transparent glass, 7" dia.

Regardless of the source of inspiration, MacNeil always creates something that respects its essence yet speaks with her distinctive inflection. Remarkably, MacNeil found her voice quite early in her career. The 41-year old artist remembers "making things in high school, making jewelry. I knew what I was going to do and went to art school".

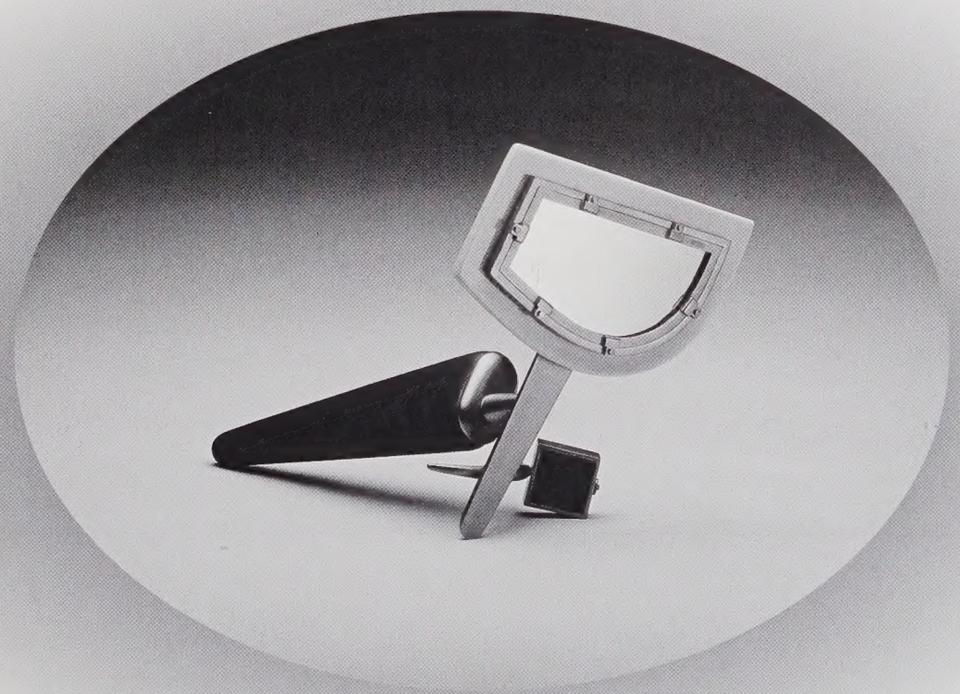
She credits her family with providing an environment that made this decision seem natural. There are architects and musicians among her relations. Her mother is a skiwear designer and her father, now a retired design engineer, started his career as a machinist. "I used to use his machine shop all the time as a kid", MacNeil remembers. "I loved that." In high school, he set up a workshop for her in the basement. Being an artist, someone who made things, seemed natural to MacNeil although finding the right art school took a bit of experimentation.

Before settling on the Rhode Island School of Design, MacNeil spent one year at the Philadelphia College of Art and a second at the Massachusetts College of Art. There she was introduced to glass and to her future husband, Dan Dailey, a well known artist working in glass, who also incorporates metal in his witty lamps and sculptures. At RISD she studied metalworking under John Prip. She praises the program for allowing her to explore jewelry and other metalworking projects without having to focus on one or the other. This freedom has influenced the way she has worked ever since, moving back and forth between jewelry and sculpture easily and without valuing one more than the other. MacNeil does not see "... a big difference between the jewelry and the sculpture. Of course, one is wearable. Thought-wise, there's no difference. I take the jewelry just as seriously as the sculpture".

The artist has pursued her art since her high school wire-bending days when she sold her jewelry on the street. Before she graduated from RISD in 1976, MacNeil was participating in exhibitions. A December 1976 review in *Craft Horizons* of "Illuminated Glass" at the Cooper & French Gallery in Providence includes mentions of work by Dale Chihuly as well as describing in detail MacNeil's "elegant three-dimensional window".[4]

Early on the Corning Museum of Glass recognized her work by acquiring a 1980 *Hand Mirror,* one of a series begun as an undergraduate at RISD. Like MacNeil's mature work, it is an assemblage of geometric forms playing off of each other in terms of shape, color, and material. For its handle the mirror has an orange-red cone with a blunted point. It is hand-blown glass treated with acid to matte the typically shiny surface. The gleam is left to the gold-plated brass connections of mirror to handle and the mirror's frame. In this work, MacNeil has eschewed another of glass's qualities, its transparency. The backing for the mirror is Vitrolite, an opaque glass available in a range of colors, manufactured from the 1930s until the early 1950s, which was much used for architectural applications. MacNeil and other contemporary artists working in glass including Henry Halem, David Huchthausen, Mary Van Cline, as well as MacNeil's husband Dailey have used it to contrast with the more familiar and expected transparency of glass. The mirror itself is glass and, of course, reflective. Its surface is small and although quite functional would not give the user a complete view of his or her face. The piece sits so that the handle stands upright at an angle, ready to be picked up but not necessarily in the most natural way.

A similar hand mirror was featured in the February-March 1980 issue of *American Craft.* There MacNeil explained that she made "decorative functional objects using a sculptural approach to the designs. The unusual combination of shapes and parts give character and are usually exaggerations of the functional aspect of design".[5] As always the artist has honored the history of the decorative arts and their relationship to use, but she is more interested in emphasizing the qualities and requirements of function in ways that call attention to them rather than unobtrusively fulfilling them.



Hand Mirror, 1980
24k plated brass,
acid polished glass,
polished glass
12 x 6 x 4"
Photo by Susie Cushner

Neck Collar, 1992
24k plated brass, acid polished, multi-colored glass
Photo by Bill Truslow

Necklace, Rams Horn, 1995
24k plated sterling, acid polished clear glass, 7" dia.
Photo by Bill Truslow

Terri Lonier writing in a 1985 issue of the German magazine *Neues Glas* saw the hand mirrors as: "MacNeil's initial efforts in bridging the worlds of sculpture and jewelry. Their small-scale elegance, mixed with a tinge of traditional functionalism, reveal the seeds of her later aesthetic concerns, including color, pattern, design, and an awareness of the qualities of light and reflection."[6]

The relationship of form to function informs all of MacNeil's work whether in the area of jewelry where the object must be both wearable and decorative, or in her more sculptural efforts where the vessel, her preferred format, becomes a vehicle for her compositional exercises and her conceptual content. She has a great respect for the usable decorative arts: "That's what's in all the history books – the pot that somebody used to eat from; they took pride in it and decorated it. It is a really important part of culture." MacNeil works "in the same manner as past societies have, making utilitarian objects a format for expression".[7] For her, however, the expression focuses on form not function. From the 1980s on, MacNeil has made a series of small sculptures inspired by the vessel.

Pyramidal Vessel, 1981, may be described as a vessel in terms of being a container, but it is its sculptural quality that is most assertive. Clear plate glass panels form the side of the pyramid, a container of sorts in its full-scale Egyptian form and for MacNeil a container that she has filled with an arrangement of geometric shapes on a litter or bier.

In 1983 she did a series of stacked plate glass *vessels* where the pyramid became a stepped mastaba and the walls of the *vessel* were delineated by the layers of plate glass held suspended by metal spacers.

In some respects MacNeil's artistic researches have been within a narrow range. She has been faithful to a format and to her materials, exploring each with intensity and commitment. It is imperative that the artist be convinced about the idea before she starts a piece: "I have to be really happy with the idea in my mind before I spend the time on it." Once she has found an idea that intrigues her, she devotes herself to a serious examination of it, something that may take years, developing the idea into a series. *Abstract Vessel*, 1994, appears as a further development of her *Suspended Parallels*, 1986. In the earlier piece, planes of plate glass alluded to the vessel form but, of course, could not fulfill that function as the sides were open. In more recent works, the forms are similar but a thicker, solid piece of glass has been substituted for the parallel planes.

For MacNeil there is a symbiotic relationship between conceiving and making, between the material and the maker. Unlike many artists working today, MacNeil works alone. Her creative process demands an intimate involvement with the actual execution. As Lonier notes: "the design of her work springs from neither the material nor the shape alone, but a union of the two during a process of creative discovery."[8] Although that process begins with a drawing, "It's not really a process of mine to completely draw the thing. It would be nice if things went that way, but it never does", she explains. "I have to keep changing with what happens during the process."

Drawing for MacNeil serves another purpose, "I make sketches to save ideas", she says. "My sketchbook only makes sense to me. I just jot down details or ideas before I forget them and then use it as a resource later."

Because of the way MacNeil works, materials play a very important role in both the final object and in its forming. Trained as a metalsmith, she believes that metal is beautiful, but she says, "I always felt that I needed more of a punch. I wasn't interested in working with chemicals and patinas and all that". She has always mixed materials: ivory, ebony, plastics, and, of course, glass – "glass was exciting". For a 1995 benefit sale of gold and silver jewelry at the American Craft Museum, MacNeil wrote: "The unique characteristics of glass, the many ways it can be worked, offer unlimited possibilities. Color can be optically clear, subtly translucent, or boldly opaque. The surfaces can be brilliantly polished or lustrous satin, or textured and dull. These various properties guide my approach to visually compatible metals and the emphasis of certain elements of design."[9]

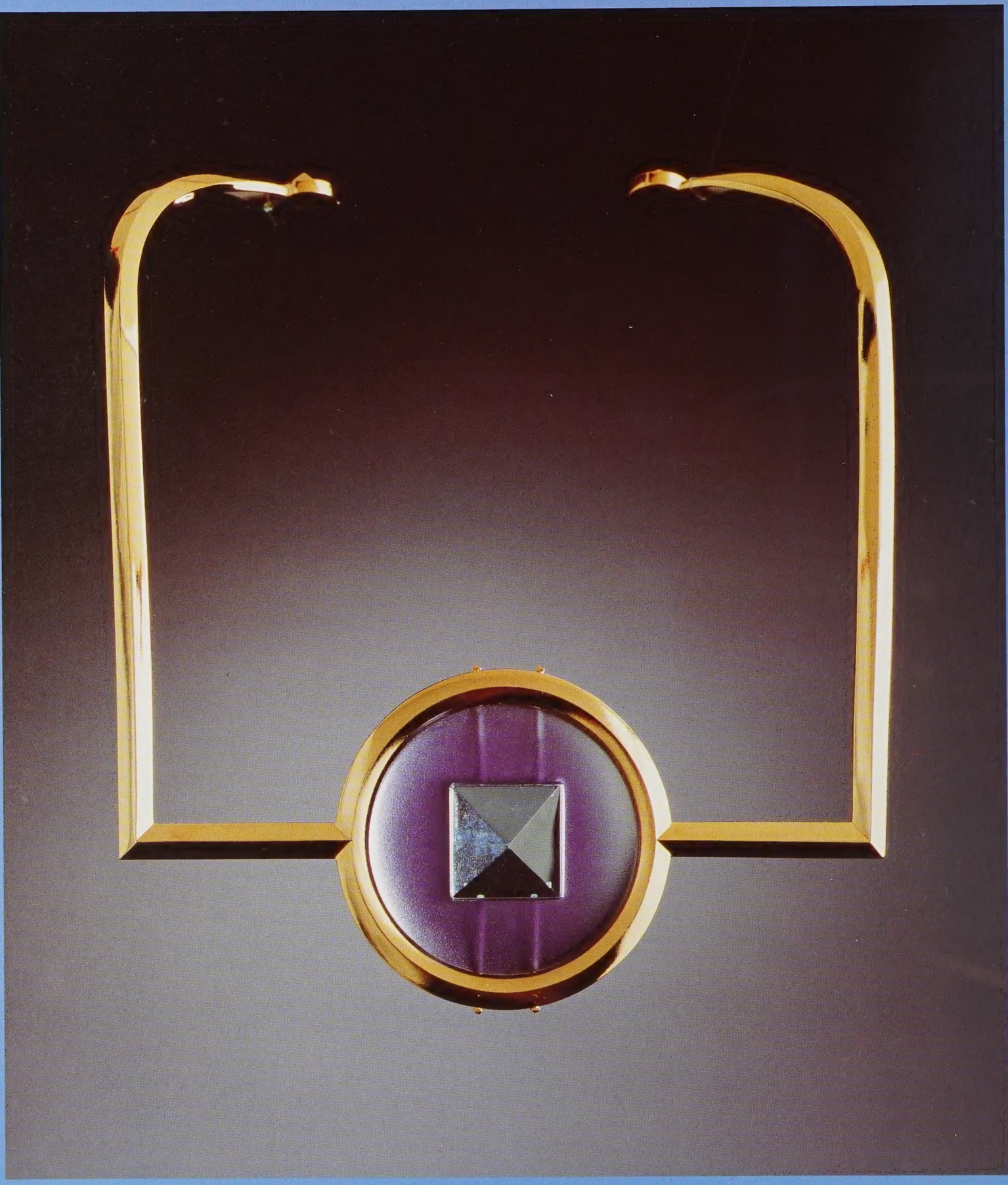
Both the metal as well as adding "a unique twist" to her work is absolutely necessary. She exhibits widely within the gallery network that began developing in the early 1970s to showcase the glass arts. Metal plays a vital role beyond the decorative as she uses it for "the mechanical connection", which becomes "an integral part of the design". In jewelry merely stringing the individual glass elements together does not interest her. It is the manner by which the parts are held together by metal that serves her aesthetic as well as her practical needs.

In her sculptures she works with brass that she plates with 24k or patinates a rich brown. Her jewelry may be 14k, although often she uses gold-plated brass. "I have more freedom if I use brass, yet with some of the jewelry where I can use gold, I do it. With the collars it would be ridiculous. I don't mind plating things at all. I feel like I have more freedom. Sometimes I even plate the 14k with 24k to get that really rich yellow color." She does not use silver because it tarnishes.

MacNeil executes everything herself. She enjoys the labor, although she is considering casting rather than fabricating as a technique. It will "ease off the physical labor" and "give it a softer look". She has already incorporated cast glass components in her work. When her husband was working in France on a *pâte-de-verre*[10] sculptural edition for Cristallerie Daum in the late 1970s, MacNeil was able to cast many elements that she has subsequently incorporated into her work.

In 1984 she made several *pâte-de-verre* vases that were an updated take on Art Deco. There were many weighty and geometric *pâte de verre* decorative objects made in the 1920s and 1930s, notably by Daum and Lalique; MacNeil's vessels are even more geometric and mechanistic although the cast glass has a softer appearance than the plate glass and Vitrolite that she more typically has used in her work.

Neck Collar, 1990
24k plated brass,
polished optical glass,
painted aluminum
Photo by Chuck Mayer



In her jewelry she has hung the more organic cast elements on ropes of woven gold mesh. The effect was, as always, contemporary but evocative of the Renaissance. MacNeil's pieces done since 1993 recall pendants seen in Hans Holbein's royal portraits for Henry VIII or even the chain and pendant found in the grave of Caterina Jagellonica, the Queen of Sweden, who died in 1583.[11]

In addition to the consistency of format and materials in MacNeil's oeuvre is an element of humor. She sees it as a necessary corollary to the strictness and precision of the work. Everything must fit exactly and is a "... serious procedure, so I try to get a little bit of humor in", she explains.

MacNeil's subversion of function adds a slyly comic note to her sculptures. For example, in *Tri Form Vessel Construction,* one can see the cobalt blue conical blown form as the vessel, but it has one side sliced off and it has slipped on its axis so it looks like a vase gone slightly mad. The thick red rim, bolted to the top, is echoed by a similar structure that might have been the foot, but now acts more as a decorative circular form on the quite substantial base, substantial both in its material: granite, and shape: a thick *y*. It sits on even thicker clear crystal feet, which are stepped half cylinders similar to the one which half-covers the opening to the *vase*. One could discuss the relationship of the forms (various hard-edged geometric shapes), of the colors (primary for the glass to mottled gray for the stone), and of the materials (glass, metal, and stone), but it is the overall composition that remains memorable and funny. Humor can also be seen in MacNeil's *Pyramidal Vessel:* The opening is far too small to accommodate the introduction of its contents.

There is also wit in MacNeil's jewelry. A 1992 *Neck Collar* of gold-plated brass set with cabochons of colored glass evokes the Middle Ages, but it looks like a caricature of a necklace for a Dark Age princess or even a crown if it were turned upside-down. But it is not just a joke. In the medieval period, it was common practice to set jewelry and reliquaries with glass gems so MacNeil's strategy has a venerable precedent. The idea of necklace/crown also refers to the *tiara russe,* which could be worn both ways. Based on the traditional *kokoschnik,* the form originated in the Russian court.[12]

In recent years MacNeil has made more jewelry than sculpture because it is less demanding. "It's a relief from making the sculpture. The sculpture is physically hard on me." But lately she's been feeling the pressure to make sculpture and a desire to move beyond the vessel format. Having "only investigated the decorative arts", thinking about other forms has been "... difficult. I have a desire to not use the vessel form any more, but haven't quite resolved it yet. That's probably why I haven't made sculpture in a little while because I'd like to make a step."

Whatever that step may be, one can be sure that it will be carefully considered, compositionally resolved, and beautifully executed.

Karen Chambers writes on glass and metals. She resides in New York, NY.

NOTES

[1] All quotations from the artist, unless otherwise noted, come from a telephone interview conducted on 29 November 1995.
[2] MacNeil, Linda, "Artists' Statements", *Glass Art Society Journal,* 1981, p. 54.
[3] Black, J. Anderson, *The Story of Jewelry,* New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1974, p. 96.
[4] Cooper, Michele, "Glass/Wood", *Craft Horizons,* Vol. 36, No. 6, December 1976, p. 59.
[5] "Linda MacNeil", *American Craft,* Vol. 40, No. 1, February-March 1980, p. 45.
[6] Lonier, Terri, "Linda MacNeil – Artistic Innovation in Glass", *Neues Glas,* No. 2, 1985, p. 61.
[7] MacNeil, *Glass Art Society Journal,* p. 54.
[8] Lonier, p. 61.
[9] MacNeil, *Gold and Silver,* New York: American Craft Museum, 1995, np.
[10] *Pâte de verre* is a technique purported to have been invented in ancient Egypt and revived in France in the 19th century. It is a glass casting process in which crushed glass, frit, is placed in a mold and heated in an oven until it melts and fuses in a solid form.
[11] Evans, Joan, *A History of Jewellery 1100-1879,* Boston: Boston Book & Art Publisher, 1970, plate 66.
[12] Gere, Charlotte, *American and European Jewelry 1830-1914,* New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1975, pp. 32-33.

Neck Collar, 1994
24k plated brass, acid polished glass
6 x 8 x ½"
Photo by Bill Truslow

Observations: Ben Cunningham

Ben Cunningham considers the complex histories of the uses and functions of metals and jewelry, that in a lesser artists hands would become confusing and excessive.

He frequently employs metals and other materials of the laboratory such as glass and plastic tubing, their resistance to corrosion and contamination a mocking reminder of the body's imperfections, its susceptibility to feelings, emotions, and disease. And in this age in which the pandemic of SDTs are encountered daily in our politics and our media the materials clinical facticity is an all too familiar and prescient reminder of our own bodily corruptibility.

His work, too, resonates with the false hope of technology, the reality of the contaminating virus, and the comfort of the personal and the confidential: the ring that encircles the finger as a sign of commitment, a necklace that becomes a golden, luminous shadow of an embrace.

Cunningham's works are almost all tokens, gifts, intimate markers of the bodies junctures: rings that can be nervously and absent-mindedly turned around the finger; bracelets of vials, whose contents slowly seep and mix together creating an amalgam of fluids; shirts slowly stained and eventually crystallized by capillary action; and finally the rosary which elicits a ceremonial prayer of fate and faith.

For Cunningham jewelry is neither the vehicle for an obvious symbolism nor an excuse for small scale sculpture; it is, instead, an intimate and ultimately timeless gift of life and hope.

Above, right
Contaminated Shirt, 1992
blue dye, enameled basin, cloth
30 x 22"

Above, left
Contaminated Shirt (detail)

Left, clockwise from upper left
Contamination Bracelet, 1992
glass, inks, silver, plastic tube, 3 x 6"

Contamination Necklace, 1992
glass, silver, plastic tube,
saline solution, ink, 13 x 6"

Contaminated Necklace, 1991
14k, 10 x 6"

Contaminated Ring, (detail), 1992
salt, silver, glass,
steel basin, ink,12 x 1"

As Large as Life

The Work of Lori Talcott

... And so it came to pass that of the mostly sons and occasional daughters of the Heroes, there was one of great cleverness and determination, who goes by many names but will be known for our purposes as the Queen, who, after years of toil did slay the evil old giant of artistic indifference, so that the praise flowed forth in a sudden flood from far and wide, so that all those who had believed in her talent, as well as those who had been asleep at the wheel, were fairly drowned it...

Text: Dana Standish
Photographs by Richard Nicol

It is difficult to keep from making a Norse myth out of the work of Lori Talcott, so full is it of intent and imagery that is nothing short of epic. Talcott works within the vocabulary of Northern European folk art, specifically the understated excess of Norwegian folk jewelry with floral and heart motifs that go back hundreds of years but somehow find new life under the fiery gaze of her relentless torch.

"If you look at a book on ethnic jewelry, it stops at the borders of Europe", says Talcott. "It's taboo to call it ethnic when it crosses the line into our own culture, but if you look below the surface of your own culture you'll find that there are many interesting traditions there; that you don't have to look to another culture for bizarre traditions."

Lori Talcott is a woman with a mission. Granted it's a strange mission, but it's a mission nonetheless: she is trying to carry on, in her work, the unbroken tradition of motifs and visual elements that make up the visual vocabulary of Northern European folk jewelry, an art form which is gradually being lost to mass production and mass indifference. "I'm fascinated by the fact that it's a living tradition, like folk songs", she says. "They are an unbroken tradition. You are given a song by a singer or a fiddler. They give you a version, but you have to play it for yourself." Talcott has done a similar thing with her work; she has been given the *song*, the traditional imagery which she has enlivened with her own particular melody and rhythm, capturing the motion and the nuances of the tradition in a way that is hers alone. Talcott is quick to point out that even her strictly traditional Norwegian folk pieces are not reproductions. "I'm making my own choices, out of a rich vocabulary within certain specific linguistic boundaries, unlike a reproduction, where we only get to see the vocabulary of one speaker where the work becomes like a lost Native American language."

... The Queen decided that she could not stay where she was any longer. She knew she must go to where she could continue to conquer poor craftsmanship and vanquish artistic mediocrity. "Southward", thought the Queen, "is too hot and too California. Westward, there was nowhere to go without getting wet. In the East, the sun rises at an ungodly hour. Northward was darker even than Tacoma and full of moose." The Queen decided to cut her losses and build her empire close to her ancestral homeland. "Seattle Home", shouted the Queen, and to Seattle she rode...

Talcott grew up in the jewelry business. She was the fourth generation to work in the family business: Talcott's, the venerable Olympia, Washington, jewelry store. When her great-grandfather started the store Washington was not yet a state. Talcott now works at the bench where her great-grandfather made the Seal of the Great State of Washington, when word came that statehood was conferred. An early ad for Talcott's hangs on the wall of Lori Talcott's studio. Among the services offered were gold teeth, optometry, watch repair, umbrellas, and fire and marine insurance, proving that the store knew how to do almost as many things as Lori Talcott knows how to do now. During the Depression, people brought in chickens and hens to pay off their bills at the store. The importance of family reputation is something that Talcott knows about. "People kept their money in the store's vault, because, they trusted us more than they trusted the bank."

Talcott knew early on that she wanted to be a jeweler. "I loved messing around at the store. I knew I was good with my hands." She also exhibited precocious signs of the high standards that were to follow her into her mature work. "When I was six years old", she says, "my father gave me an emerald ring, which I returned to him because I could tell it had a synthetic stone and I wanted a real emerald". Talcott's father, trained as a watchmaker, encouraged her discerning eye and taught her the importance of listening to the customer, a skill upon which she draws heavily when making her commissioned works. Her father, she says, taught her how to see.

To understand Lori Talcott, you have to understand stubbornness, or at least have an appreciation for the trait. It takes a certain mental tenacity to make the thousands of almost subatomic springs and microscopic filigree that she uses to build up her traditional pins and neckpieces. When Talcott wanted to learn how to make jewelry, she went about it in her usual determined way. She began by designing jewelry which her father's goldsmith told her would be too difficult to make. He suggested that she learn how to make jewelry herself, so that she would better understand the process of construction. "I learned my goldsmithing techniques over the phone", she says. "I would call the store's goldsmith when I had a problem. I'd have my torch in my hand and would be near tears and he'd say to me, 'Could you hold the piece up to the phone?'" Talcott's explorations led her to the University of Washington, where she earned an undergraduate degree in metals in 1990.

... In the morning of the first night of the journey, a huge storm arose. The winds mocked and battered the Queen, and then fell into an exhausted silence. But with each dying sound of the wind a shape grew into being. One after another the new shapes were born from the sighing that had been the wind in the Queen's ears. The shapes came forth from trees, from birds, from the plant life, and the promise of the hillsides. The shapes grew on trees, free for the taking for the Queen was clever enough to see their power...

Talcott is adamant that her works do not have *meaning*, that the symbols she uses do not, themselves, have any inherent message. Neither are her works *personal* or, God forbid, *spiritual*. For those who know in their deepest being that all objects made with true integrity have some aspect of the maker's spirit in them and thus are *personal* because they were made by a particular person, this is not too great a stretch, "Heart brooches have been worn by women since the Middle Ages", she says. "It's just our culture that has recently lost the thread. One thing I have learned from the folk jewelry is that it's not the jewelry object that has meaning. We bring meaning that we attach to the jewelry. The meaning of a symbol can change; we love the shape – a heart, a cross – on a subliminal level and the meaning is something we attach to it. Symbols mean different things to different people."

... Presently the Queen set to work to build for herself an artistic vocabulary on the top of the mountain that she had made from a molehill. For days and months and years she toiled in the vineyards of apprenticeship and community college teaching, and never – well, almost never – grew tired, so strong was her determination. And her reputation rose until it was as high as the crowns on one of her silver birds...

Talcott is influenced by Gothic and Romanesque art, the period where mankind was experiencing a re-awakening to the beauty of nature. She says she appreciates the "momentary reconciliation" between mankind and nature that is represented in Gothic art. The naiveté, the sweet uncertainty of the forms and images appeal to her. Her pieces may depict birds, traditionally a link between nature and mankind, frequently with human faces and wearing crowns. Sometimes engraved birds are trapped in a heart-shaped hothouse which is surrounded by flames. Buds and tendrils encircle the scene. Birds may meet in the middle of a piece, close enough to tell a secret, though they do not touch. A door opens to reveal the emptiness inside.

Some of Talcott's pieces are quite literal. Her 1994 *Untitled* brooch features a heavy half-timber door embedded into the front of a heart shape. Vines and tendrils encircle the door, protecting it from encroaching flames. On the back of the piece is engraved a 13th century poem in Old Icelandic. It tells the story of a woman riding with her husband and describes briefly the woman's attire, which includes the keys to the storehouses. "The keys represent the woman's responsibility to regulate food for the entire farm", explains Talcott. "The farm's reputation, and the reputation of your family was at stake. Reputation was the most important thing to these people, more important than the display of wealth. Back then you were known by what kind of woman your mother was, and her mother before her; and the things you did would affect your children and their children. It wasn't like today, where we can re-invent ourselves." On the front of the brooch, the door swings wide to reveal emptiness. The piece is decorated with barley kernels, traditionally a symbol of fertility, and on the back, a small key which unlocks the power of family reputation, the burden of family responsibility. Talcott calls this piece her minimalist piece, "because there are only 20,000 things going on".

PREVIOUS PAGE,
TOP TO BOTTOM

Brooch, 1996
brass, silver, 2 x 4"

Rigstula, brooch, 1994
brass, silver, 2½ x 4½"

Brooch, 1996
brass, silver, 2½ x 4½"

RIGHT,
SINGLE IMAGE

Slangesølje, traditional, 1995
silver, goldplate, garnets, 3 x 5"

FAR RIGHT,
TOP TO BOTTOM

Malersølje, traditional, 1995
silver, goldplate, 6"

Brooch, 1995
silver, goldplate, garnets, 4½"

Bolesølje, traditional, 1996
silver, goldplate, 3½"

Talcott's work life is divided between her contemporary work, which draws heavily on the motifs of Scandinavian folk art, and her traditional work, which is her attempt to carry on the diminishing traditions of Northern European folk artists. She builds all of her pieces from wire and sheet silver in the traditional way. She does not use any castings. She seems to be on a personal crusade to make filigree acceptable in polite society. "When I say the word *filigree*, people hear *macramé*", says Talcott. "It's like the heart shape, it has been ruined by commercialization, but I still love the shape. People have bad associations with filigree, but really the technique is just the vehicle for the beauty of the traditional folk jewelry." Talcott specializes in the work of Telemark, Norway, where she has apprenticed to master silversmith Hilde Nodtvedt, She is fascinated by the *language* of the folk art and of how within a very strict set of aesthetic traditions there is room for the individual artist to create a unique work, by choosing from the vocabulary available. She likes being a part of the anonymity of the process of ensuring the survival of this folk art tradition, "... just one of those who have helped to smooth the stone to make it perfect".

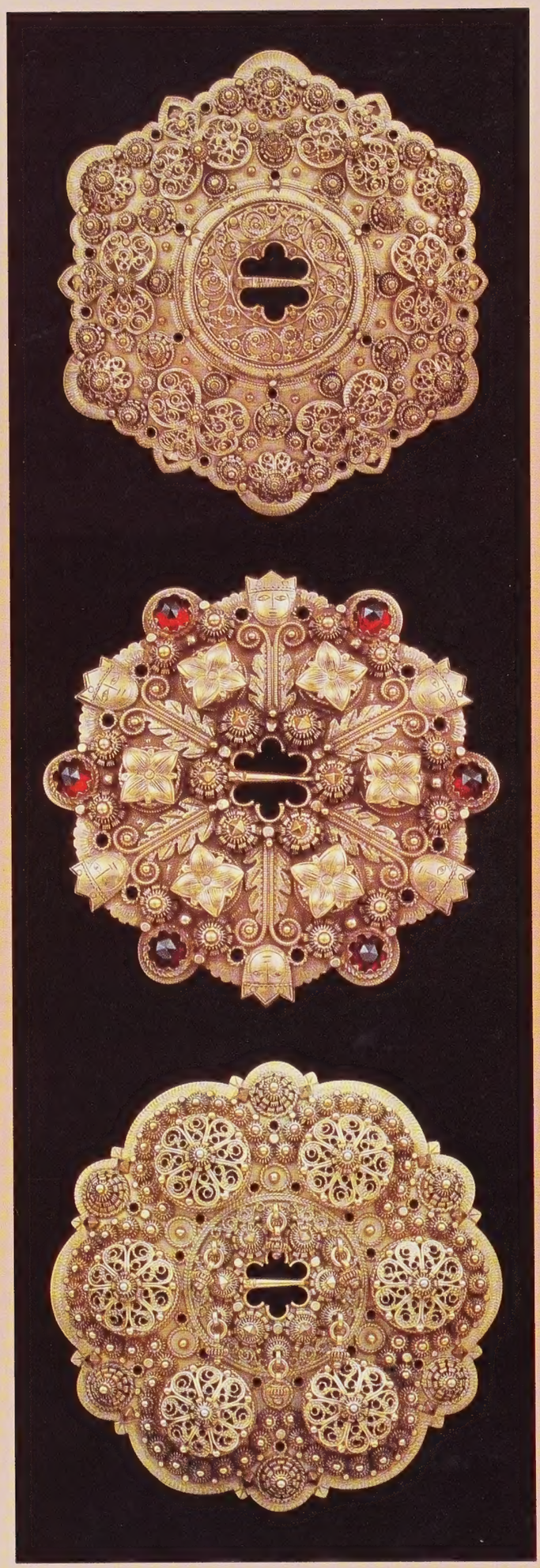
The subtle repetitive power of a folk dance is evident in Talcott's traditional work. She creates a rhythmic notion of elements coming together in the center and then radiating outward, a rhythmic eddy caught at the edge and twirled to the center again in a pattern that has been repeated for thousands of years but has never been done quite the same way before. In much of Talcott's work, what is hidden is of equal importance to that which is immediately visible. Hours of engraving or filigree will be covered up by large domed disks that hang all over the front of a piece, obscuring the detail. As in folk dance, you must look below the surface to see the true pattern, the intent of the tradition.

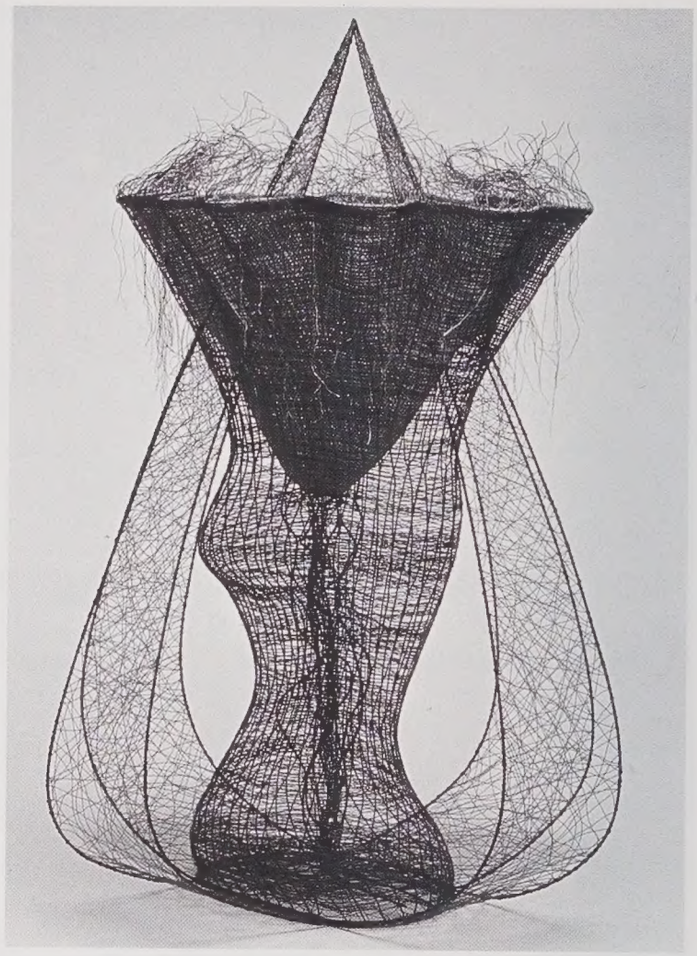
These works, the layer upon layer of built-up elements, are not meant to be taken in at once. "If you walk into a forest, you can't possibly take in everything", says Talcott. "My challenge is to do something layered and complex and still give the eye someplace to rest. My goal is to achieve the sublime beauty of Japanese pottery or a Bronze Age standing stone. I would like to see that perfect balance someday in my work. When I finally get it I'll probably be 80 years old and I'll have made only one piece that's right."

...Wherever the Queen trod there were signs of nature and of love. Succulent tendrils of tender leaves wrapped themselves around her work, as though to protect it. Birds, sent as messengers, nested atop her jewelry and twittered enigmatically for all who were wise enough to listen. Presently the Queen looked to the small but solid reaches of her niche in the art world. "Come to me", *she beckoned, and two wise birds wearing crowns flew to her as from out of nowhere, from the far reaches of the earth. The Queen sent these birds, her messengers, out into the world, and every evening they returned to tell her what they had learned, the story of the day, the promise of the days to come.*

The End

Dana Standish is a writer and recovering metalsmith living in Seattle.





Textile Techniques in Metal

Mobilia Gallery

Cambridge, MA

February 6 – February 28, 1996

By Patricia Harris and David Lyon

Arline M. Fisch is the first to admit that she did not invent the use of fiber techniques in fine art metalwork. But she did write the 1975 touchstone book on the techniques from which this exhibition draws its title and, less directly, many of its pieces. Although Fisch's original publisher let the book go out of print in 1985, interest remained strong, prompting the artist to redo the volume for Lark Books in an expanded and updated edition in 1996. The exhibition at Mobilia, which represents many of the artists Fisch highlights in the new version of *Textile Techniques in Metal*, celebrated the publication with a show of technical tours de force by Fisch, some of her former students at San Diego State University, and other artists employing textile techniques covered in Fisch's book.

Exhibitions arranged around technique often suffer from a sameness of the art – thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird still produces lots of blackbirds. But the Mobilia gathering illustrates the diversity of form, style, and vision possible with textile techniques in metal. Fisch admits that in her own jewelry, she is not drawn to "the hard-edged surface. I've always liked things that take a more expressionistic attitude toward the metal." Intrigued by textile techniques in metal that she found in other cultures, Fisch reinterprets them in a contemporary context to expand the possibilities of expression – an attitude she seems to pass on to her students.

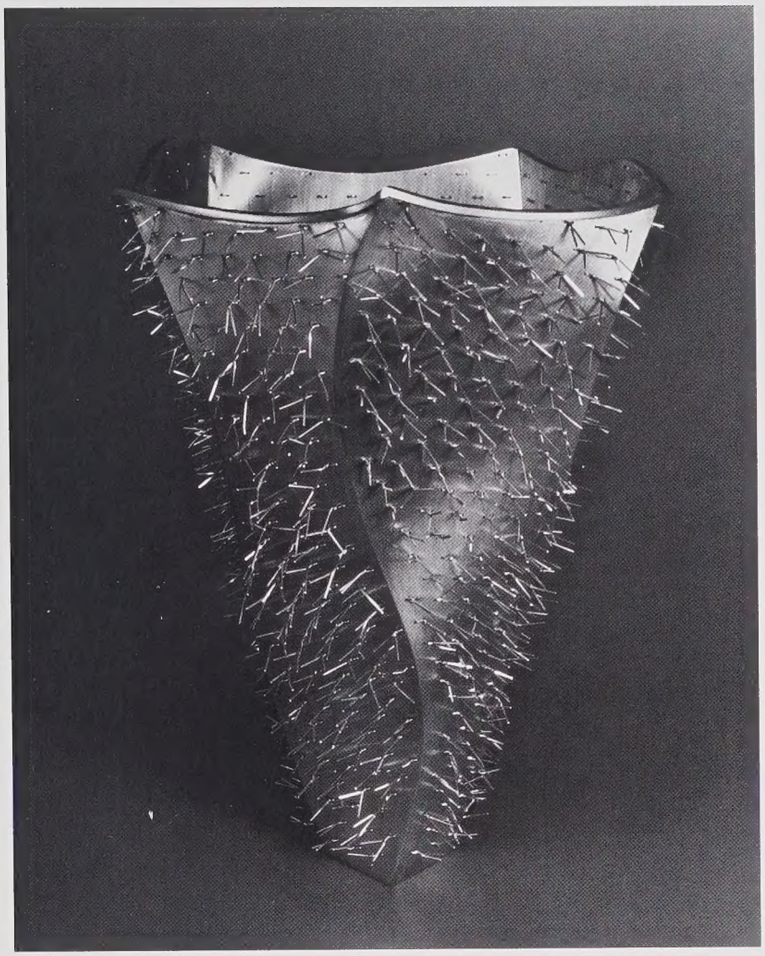
The exhibition, like the book, was dominated by Fisch's own work, in part because she has experimented more than most artists. "Basically, I explored everything I already knew or could learn to do in yarn", she explains.

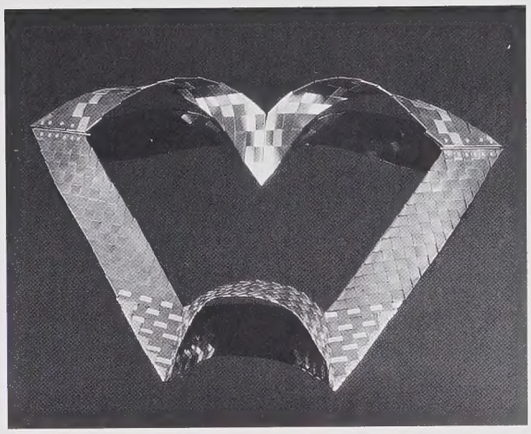
"Some were successful, some too labor-intensive, some wonderful. I've never enjoyed doing things that are punishingly long." Among the techniques represented are weaving, plaiting, crochet, hairpin lace, basket techniques, bobbin lace, knitting, and spool knitting (using rings from Barbie knitting doll kits).

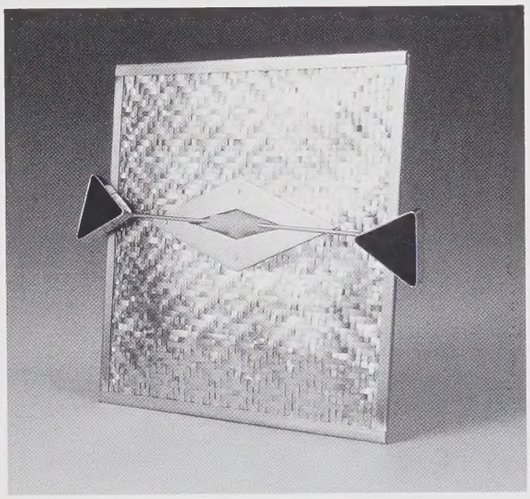
For the moment, Fisch has largely settled on handknitting to create voluminous, almost gossamer forms that nod to traditional decorative fiber in formal ruffled collars, for example. Knitted from colored copper wire, these pieces share characteristics of metal (the ability to hold a form) and textile (a soft hand and drape).

Basketry techniques also figured strongly in Fisch's work in the exhibition, especially silver strips twill-braided into sash-like cloth or constructed into square forms. By using bright and oxidized strips in the braiding (and in woven silver as well), she elicits the patterning effects typical of colored textiles. (Fisch generally produces her strips by flattening wire in a hand rolling mill, preferring strips to wire for a larger reflective surface.)

Fisch's own work has such a distinctive inevitability that it is surprising how different work by her students can be – perhaps a result of Fisch's emphasis on experimentation rather than imitation. Danish metalsmith Guldsmed Hanne Behrens works principally in heavy-gauge wires (often 18k gold and oxidized sterling silver) in very tightly woven forms that create dense, nearly solid pieces with the seeming durability of medieval chain mail. Of all the artists selected for this exhibition, Behrens most delights in playing the airiness of metal textile against the weight of solid frames and attachments.







In a related approach with strikingly different results, Stuart Golder creates extremely detailed loom-woven elements of 14k and 18k gold which he then assembles into a grid structure fabricated from sheet metal. The completed pieces of jewelry harken back to African and South American decorative gold that was lost-wax cast from models of fiber probably impregnated with wax. But because Golder's pieces are originals rather than replicas one generation removed, he is able to maintain even finer detail.

By their nature, textile techniques lend themselves to abstraction, but one sculpture in the exhibition also demonstrated the potential for whimsical representation. Paula Wolfe's strawberry basket replicates the traditional splint basket in strips of sterling silver – an object she fills with lifesize (and lifelike) ripe strawberries crocheted in coated copper wire.

Nova Scotia weaver Dawn MacNutt capitalizes on the self-supporting qualities of wire structures with hieratic sculptures suggestive of wrapped human forms. The Mobilia exhibition featured one of her small pieces, about eight inches tall, woven of fine silver and copper wires. MacNutt is perhaps better known for similar life-size structures woven of copper wire warp and natural seagrass weft – a combination that entirely blurs the line between material and technique.

Speaking of textile techniques in metal, Fisch says, "I didn't invent it. I don't own it". The multiplicity of expression in the Mobilia exhibition speaks to Fisch's success in providing a written resource as a point of departure for other artists.

Patricia Harris and David Lyon write criticism and art features from Cambridge, Massachusetts. They are co-authors of Michael James: Studio Quilts.

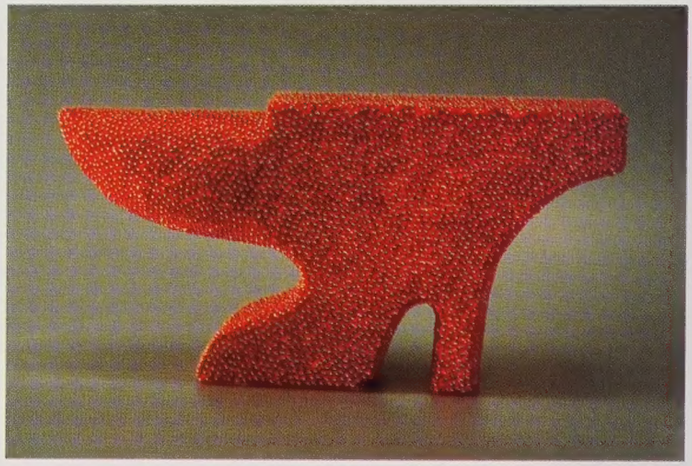
FAR LEFT
Thelma Coles
Obstacles, 1988
magnetic wire, stainless, paint, fiber
24 x 17 x 15½"

ABOVE, LEFT
Munya Avigail Upin
In Stiches
pewter, aluminum
9 x 6 x 5"

ABOVE, TOP
Arline Fisch
5 Sided Plaid, (necklace), 1992
braided sterling, onyx, 18k
12 x 14"

ABOVE, BOTTOM
Arline Fisch
Woven Square, (brooch), 1987
loom woven 18k, black onyx
3 x 3"

Erika Ayala Stefanutti
You Call That Work: Craft Tool, 1995
sequins, mixed media
12 x 24 x 7"



Issues & Intent

Contemporary American Metalwork

Susan Cummins Gallery

Mill Valley, CA

January 2 – February 3, 1996

By Tran Turner

RIGHT
June Schwarcz
Enamel Vessel #1078, 1991
10¾ x 5½"

FAR RIGHT
Joyce Scott
Date Rape, 1995
beads, wire, thread, glass
31 x 19 x 12"

Women of America, "if you're raped, you might as well relax and enjoy it, because no one will believe you".[1]

When one reads a loose-cannon pronouncement like the above and there isn't additional information, perhaps a quick visceral reaction sets in. What exactly is the issue here and what is the intent? If one finds themselves drawn into this ridiculous statement, it is likely that their preconceived gender-specific notions have already kicked in at high speed. Is this diatribe a statement of male dominance exerting the rhetoric of testosterone or is it feminist critique putting it in your face as an attempt to overthrow a synthetic intellectual inferiority complex? In either case, the emotionally charged internal drama one may feel as the result of this careless expression about rape can be a highly consuming one. Such an inflammatory statement could not possibly result in a consensus which situates everyone on an even playing field. Though this is not to say that you might just as well have no care about it whatsoever.

Issues & Intent Contemporary American Metalwork, another aggressively conceived albeit sophisticatedly presented show by Susan Cummins Gallery, established a similarly defined *divide and conquer* set of conditions (minus the criminal derision but filled with action-related aspirations). There is no mainstream or equal footing in this exhibition. But then again, the show stressed the idea of promoting critical themes. While the show included 46 objects by the same number of artists and carried a broad thematic guideline to champion "a belief in the humanistic versus the machine made" and to honor "the craft tradition even while questioning it", it proved to be more like a complex foreign film examining a diverse class structure with numerous idiosyncratic stories, coupled with difficult to read subtitles.[2] There were so many vantage points from which to view this exhibition that one wondered: What the hell was going on: confusion or absolute intrigue? Fortunately, the curators in charge made it the latter. It's too bad this exhibition did not travel to a minimum of ten other venues around the country.

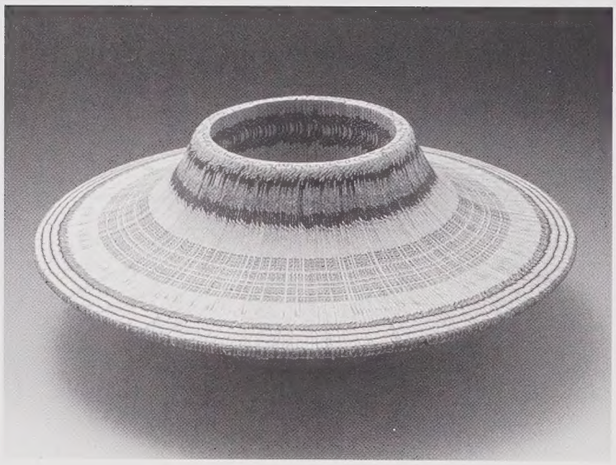
Unquestionably, the unstated intention to establish a political platform for the show was paramount, so much so that the relevance of the individual works of the artists featured immediately took a back seat. Everything became attached to the overwhelming power of this metals gathering as an avenue to introduce a material-based counterculture, making the exhibition as a whole a collective bargaining force; but to what end? Granted, the literal side of metal as metal was broad based, whether represented by outstanding works in jewelry by Susan Kingsley, Kiff Slemmons, Arline Fisch, and Mary Lee Hu; vessels by June Schwarcz and Helen Shirk, sculpture by Gary Griffin, Harriete Estel Berman, and Chris Ramsey; or the general interest in utilitarian objects exhibited by Jonathan Wahl, Marilyn da Silva, John Iverson, and David Clifford (furniture and architectural components were noticeably absent).

On the flip side, or more appropriately the side spelling out the subtext, the show entered upon a conceptual little-if-no-metal fault zone by unhesitatingly including work like Erika Ayala Stefanutti's *You Call That Work: Craft Tool.* Created from decoupaged Styrofoam, plastic beads and sequins, the piece represented a glittering red anvil. What's up with this? In her artist's statement, Stefanutti stated that her work "can be understood as belonging to professional metalsmithing because of the references to metalsmithing tools". Okay, but take it out of the framework of this exhibition and conduct a poll. Keith Lo Bue's *Unknown Female Head*, predominantly made from painted wood, glass, and vari-

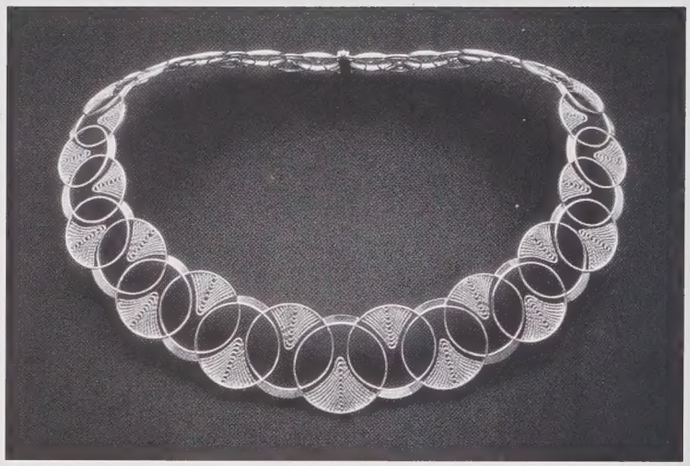
Continued on page 44

Susan Kingsley
Hostage to a Silverly Imagination, 1991
sterling, acrylic, lacquer
7 x 6 x 2¼"

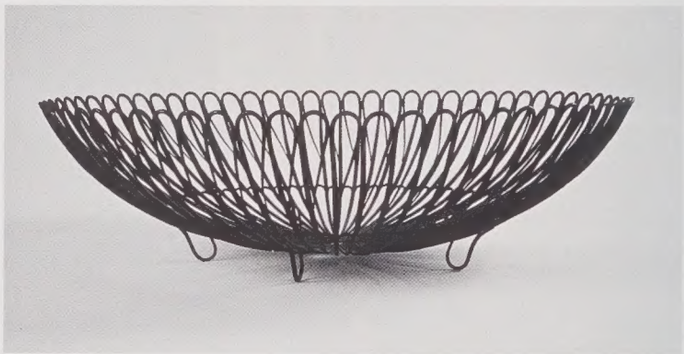
Harriete Estel Berman
Patterns of Position & Possession, 1995
pre-printed steel, painted brass
16 x 16 x 16½"



ABOVE
Kathy Buszkiewicz
Tender Revival, anklet
US currency, wood
3½ x 8½"



RIGHT, TOP
Mary Lee Hu
Choker #79, 18k, 22k
7 x 8½ x 1"



RIGHT
John Iversen
Wire Bowl, 1995
oxidized bronze
18" dia. x 5½" deep

Continued from page 42

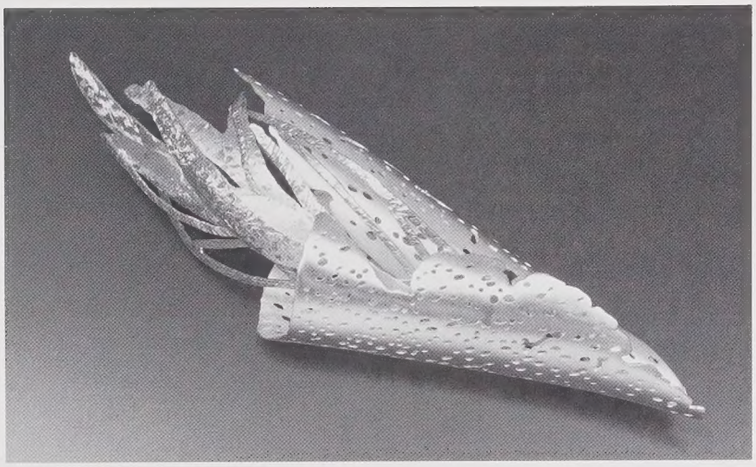
ous non-metal components, stood as a framed construction or what he called in his artist's statement a "fabricated environment". Displaying a photographic image of a late nineteenth-century woman whose mouth is confined by some experimental scientific apparatus, Lo Bue's intent was to preserve the past in such a way to evoke ineffable stories. This one's a bit more difficult to grasp because there was no visible interest on the artist's part to even conceptually reference the metals field, unless you count the silver content in the photograph and the found-object brass rod among the additional beads, crab claw, bone, mirror, and crushed glass.

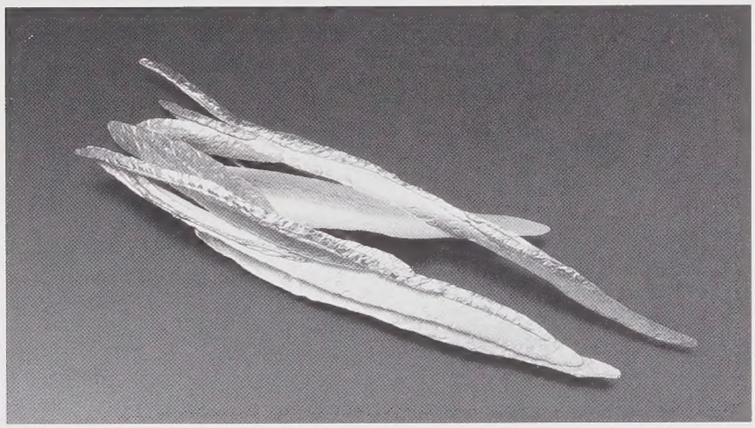
Joyce Scott, conversely, at least used metal wire to hold her glass piece together. Called *Date Rape,* this lamp worked and blown glass sculpture certainly fit right in with the other openly expressed agenda for the show – to stand as a reaction to Sculptural Concerns: Contemporary American Metalworking (shown concurrently as a traveling exhibition at the California College of Arts and Crafts).[3] Actually, all of these materially defiant works provide a hard hitting reaction to Sculptural Concerns. This also included Kathy Buszkiewicz's bracelet produced from 265 $20 bills, which, she pointed out, maintains the power of money even after the paper currency has been altered (a bargain at $1,700 after you add it up). Bruce Metcalf and Leslie Leupp both turned in mixed media wood sculptures, although admittedly they used metal components to enhance their chances. And of course, Metcalf is Metcalf.

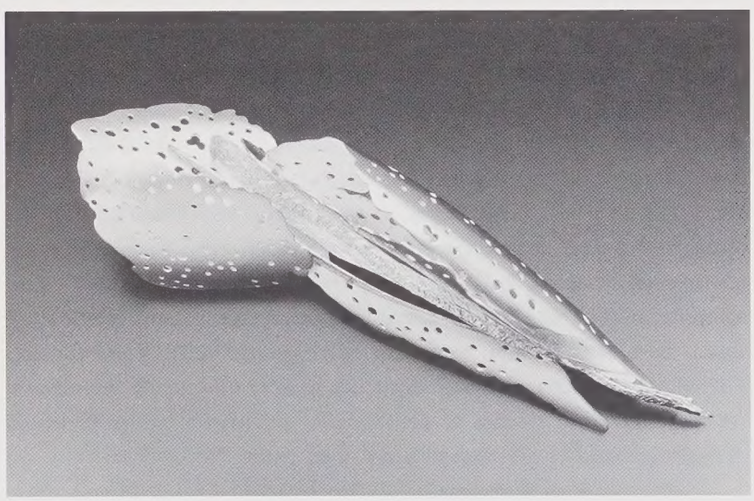
But where does all this take us? Although the examples in the exhibition comprised of alternative slug-fest materials were small in number, their forceful presence in conceptual forms comprised of wood, paper, plaster, glass, plastic, photography, and mixed non-metal materials generated a strong politically challenging elbow to the gut. The bold move to disregard the core dictate of only showing work that is dominated by the material and technical relationships of metal itself certainly produces a serious division in the expectation we should have about what exactly is current American metalwork. This is definitely a formative aesthetic breakthrough for how artists can work within the arena of contemporary metals, not to mention the entire crafts field. For a moment let us forget how a material, in this instance some type of metal, can lend itself to self-prescribed medium specific outcomes as framed within the general classifications of jewelry, vessel, sculpture, furniture, utilitarian object, or architectural component. Instead think about the capability of an artist to reverse the need for a work to be dependent upon a particular material to be medium specific. This is a provocatively fresh conceptual criteria for coming up out of the traditional trenches. Susan Cummins Gallery, unwittingly or intentionally, has somewhat clarified this new approach while still putting on a really good metals show.

Tran Turner is the Curator of Crafts at the Oakland Museum in Oakland, CA.

[1] *Issues & Intent Contemporary American Metalwork.* (exhibition announcement), Mill Valley, California: Susan Cummins Gallery, 1996.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.







TOP TO BOTTOM

Helen Shirk

Brooch AS9, 1994
silver, 14k gold
6 x 2"

Brooch AS12, 1994
silver, 14k gold
7 x 2"

Brooch AS14, 1994
silver, 14k gold
6 x 2"

Helen Shirk:

Contemporary Jewelry 1970–95

Helen Drutt Gallery

Philadelphia PA

November 8 – December 2, 1995

By Bruce Metcalf

This exhibition of Helen Shirk's jewelry was unusual in that it included Shirk's work from as far back as 1970, along with a group of brooches from the past five years. However, it wasn't a true retrospective: none of her silver and titanium jewelry from the early 1980s was included, nor were any of her vessels. Nonetheless, the two disparate groupings of jewelry made for some interesting comparisons.

The first group consisted of necklaces and bracelets made between 1970 and 1980. They started out in the once-familiar Indiana University constructivist style of juxtaposed line, surface, and mass. These works were interesting both as historical material, and for the skill with which Shirk adapted pure abstract forms to jewelry. The group also traced Shirk's gradual evolution towards a more personal style. The last work from this period, a pair of bracelets from 1980, showed how she distilled the busy compositions of the I.U. style into a few textured surfaces with varied edges, and a few subtle connections. They made the earlier work seem overstated.

The new brooches, made in 1991, 1994, and 1995, were as abstract as the early work, but decidedly more organic. The pins consisted of assembled strips of silver and gold, somewhat like a loose bundle of feathers. Each strip was textured with hammer or file marks. Color variation was minimized; in comparison to Shirk's titanium and silver jewelry from the 1980's, these pins were almost monochromatic. A few of the later brooches had several strips pierced with small, irregular holes, giving each pin a subtle *see-through* effect that heightened both texture and contrast. When worn, Shirk's new pins looked like irregular metal corsages, and were surprisingly dramatic.

Bruce Metcalf is a metalsmith and a Contributing Editor of Metalsmith *magazine. He lives and works in Philadelphia, PA.*

Enamel Guild/Northeast

Community Arts Center

Wallingford, PA

By Dr. Geraldine Velasquez

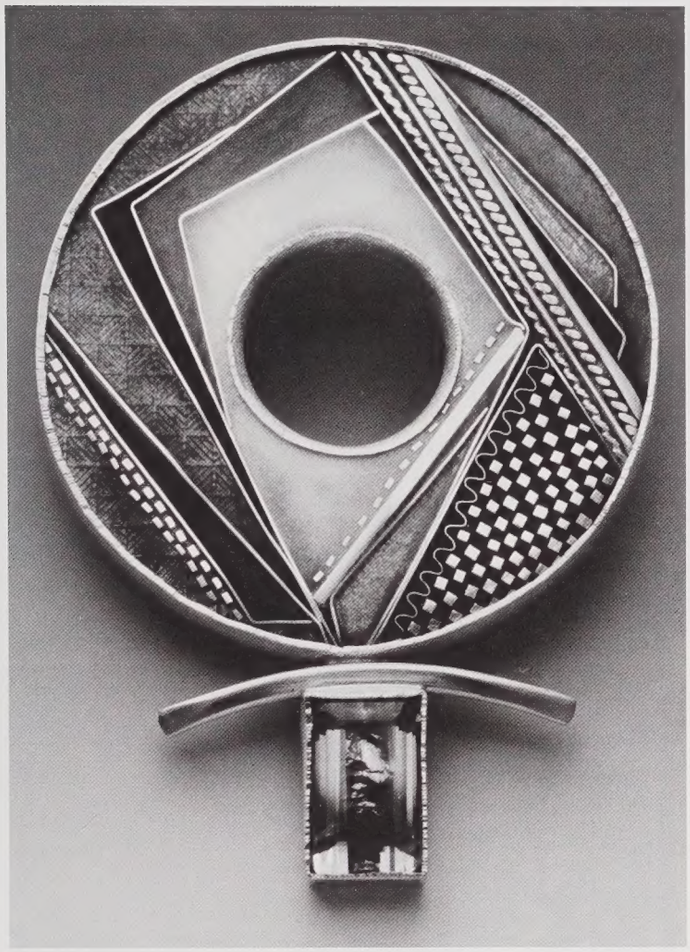
The Enamel Guild/North East exhibition at the Community Arts Center in Wallingford, Pennsylvania. happens to coincide with an exhibition of Faberge in America at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is easy to see from both exhibitions why the enamelist's art is so popular and enduring. Lustrous, luminous, translucent layers of colors are built upon and between, metal wires or on a metal support. Light shines through the glass enamel or off the highly reflective surface. We are accustomed to seeing color this way, every time we view our TV and computer monitors. And because of this, enamel art has a contemporary appeal in a way that flat, non-refractive pigment based works do not. The colors seem charged with electricity as they vibrate off the surface. Yet they also have a sense of depth, as in old master paintings which were constructed of translucent layers of oil paint.

A review of the works in the Enamel Guild/North East exhibition reveals qualities in common with the famous Master Enameler Faberge. Labor-intensive metalwork structures support the enamel surface and creates repetitive patterns and details which are the hallmarks of enamel. Intricate armatures and engraved metal supports are visible and share the glory along with the surface. Such techniques, such time-consuming processes, are reminders that man toils in the service of beauty. And we are struck with awe. This very craftsmanship transcends craft and imbues the work with grace, a quality all too lacking in contemporary art.

Notable from the work of the thirty-eight artists in this exhibition is the continuity with enamel traditions using processes such as cloisonné, plique-à-jour, and grisaille. Ritual vessels, jewelry, and hanging objects by Valeri Timofeev, Marilyn Druin, Kay Whitcomb, Isabella Corwin, and Carin Preston are particularly noteworthy in their outstanding designs achieved through complex processes.

Timofeev, Druin, and Whitcomb integrate surface design with the shape of the vessel to present harmonious cups and bowls with ritualistic connotations. Timofeev, a recent immigrant to this country from Russia, is the most classically trained. The virtuosity of the metalwork and countless patterns of applied color keep the viewer entranced with his work. To this observer, however, he is undergoing an *Americanization* in color and design since his earlier exhibition at the International Enamelist Society Conference in Virginia. His surfaces of amazing complexity are becoming more stylized and his colors, which were softer then, are tending towards more primary hues. His vessels remain dazzling nonetheless.

Marilyn Druin's jewelry and goblets are more medieval in presentation. Deep reds, cobalt blues, and the heavy use of gold within ovoid shapes seem to convey almost magical properties. One wants to wear her objects as talismans to ward off evil. Kay Whitcomb's more modern sense of design reminds us of the pleasures of the decorative surface. Refinement comes from clean, pleasing patterns devoid of the clichés that so many crafts artists use.



Best among the wall-hung works are Isabella Corwin's *fragments.* Her *Celestial Shrimp* and *Piscara* exploit the additive and subtractive possibilities of the metal and enamel. We see growth and decay in the image of shrimp. Translucent shells can be a metaphor for the process of enamel itself. In the irregular edges around the shrimp, uneven layers of enamel are exposed to reveal the carpus being shed. And in *Piscara* the metal wire supporting the enamel breaks through the surface. This image subtly reinforces the above-and-below nature of the art. We are aware of the fusion of the enamels through the aggregation of rich colors even while the creature appears to decompose. A highly intelligent mind and hand are at work here.

The exhibition reflects a current trend of contemporary craft: that content and means of expression have an unresolved relationship within the object. The fact that the many of the images are not necessarily best expressed through enamels, though pleasing to those artists who believe they transcend the *craft* of their art, only enriches by comparison the works of those noted above. The decisions and problem solving, the paring away the unnecessary while mastering the essential, the techniques inherent in metalsmithing and enameling, in evidence are the qualities that make these works outstanding.

Selected works from this show are to travel to the New Jersey Designer Craftsmen Gallery in New Brunswick, New Jersey in March.

Dr. Geraldine Velasquez is Director of The Forum for Research and criticism in the Crafts at Georgian Court College, where she is Professor of Art. Dr. Velasquez has published articles on her research on the attitudes and beliefs of contemporary craftspeople in The New York Times, The Crafts Report *and the* Boston Globe. *She has been an Evaluator for Crafts Fellowships for The New Jersey State Council on the Arts.*

ABOVE
Isabella Corwin
Celestial Shrimp
cloisonné, 4½" dia.

ABOVE, LEFT
Marilyn Druin
Brooch/Pendant
fine silver, cloisonné enamel, ametrine

LEFT
Valeri Timofeev
Goblet

FAR LEFT
Carin Preston
Group

Noted

Robert Ebendorf
East/West, (brooch), 1995
silver, 18k, pearls, tin

The Fine Art of the Tin Can

OXOXO Gallery

Baltimore, MD

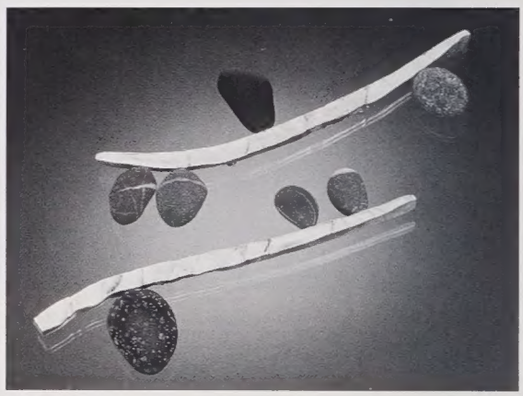
April 12 – May 31, 1996

Found object jewelry is frequently viewed and discussed in relation to the avant-garde tradition of artists rejecting standard materials to critique conventional notions of beauty and fine metals; and certainly that strategy has proved to be a fruitful method for many contemporary artists. The Fine Art of the Tin Can at OXOXO Gallery has, however, gone beyond that standard approach to offer a broad based overview of a variety of found object metals.

There was, of course, numerous examples of *anti-aesthetic* works exhibited, but there was an equal amount of excellent examples of fragments of tin cans used as abstract color fields, bits and labels which served as nostalgic mementos and as catalysts to activate childhood memories, cans used as environmentally conscious media, and tin objects which served to parody and critique our consumer oriented culture.

Such scope, while overwhelming, offers viewers an excellent opportunity to survey the variety of approaches and strategies. Additionally in conjunction with the publication of photographer Bobby Hanson's book *The Fine Art of the Tin Can*, available through Lark Books, Altamont Press, the exhibition will insure that many viewers, new to metals, will witness the extraordinary complexity of contemporary metal artists employing commonplace materials in lieu of fine metals.

The exhibition included works by: Christopher Anna, Boris Bally, Lucille Beards, Harriete Estel Berman, Teri Blond, Ricki Boscarino, Elizabeth Brim, Tina Chisena, Randall Cleaver, Janet Cooper, Harvey Crabclaw, Robert Dancik, Chris Darway, Daniel Eaves, Robert Ebendorf, Sue Eyet, Julie Flanigan, Laurie Flannery, John Grant, Richard Haddick, Bobby Hansson, Judith Hoyt, Jerry Hovanec, Ruthann Hovanec, Carol Hsu, Jean-Pierre Hsu, Jan Hutchinson, Ge Ge Kingston, Christine Kristen, Shana Kroiz, Pamela Lins, Keith Lo Bue, Tim McCreight, Betty Oliver, Spoon Popkin, Roy, Christina Shmigel, Majorie Simon, Victor Spinski, Jack Trimper, Dan van Allen, Ellen Wieske, Natalie Weeks, David Williamson, Roberta Williamson, Marcia Wilson, J. Fred Woell, and Sandra Zilker. •



Sam Shaw
Brooches, 1995
beach stones, 18k

Spring Showcase: Sam Shaw

Sheila Nussbaum Gallery

Millburn, NJ

April 26 – May 25, 1996

The impetus of Sam Shaw's aesthetic is familiar to all. A rounded beach or river stone, smoothed by nature over the gradual advance of geological time, catches the eye and fits perfectly in the hand. Shaw, however, goes further than casting the stone into a dish on his dresser. Studying its shape and parabolic curves the artist sets these found *gems* carefully within the bezel of a ring or he arranges them delicately along the edge of a seemingly folded and twisted gold form.

If it were not for the elegance of his settings and his straightforward presentation one might think that Shaw's work parodies the excess of ornately set cut gems. Yet the simplicity of the works exhibits a sincere honesty and guilelessness of method. Nor is this work the all too familiar *hippie/whole earth* jewelry made by some naive student of nature. One suspects, instead, the influence of a Zen tea cup or a Japanese garden. This artist negotiates with skill and finesse that delicate edge between designed elegance and the unadorned beauty of nature's natural forms. •

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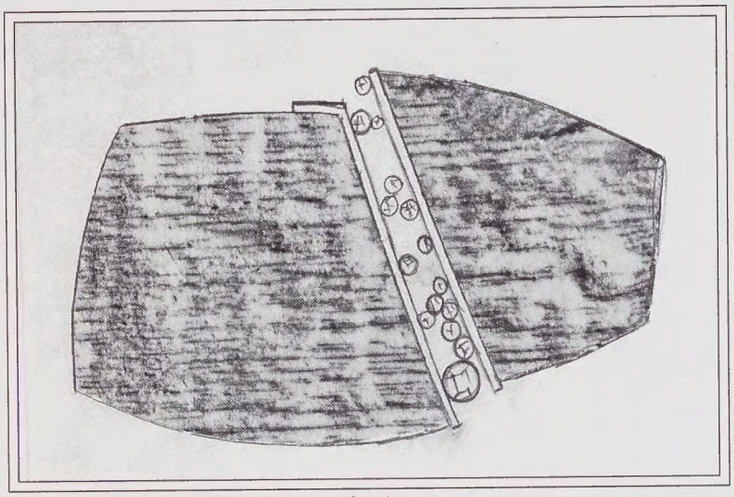

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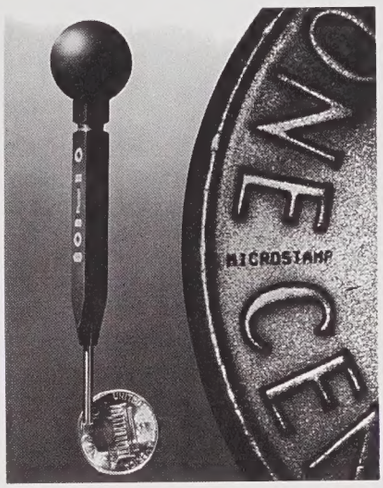

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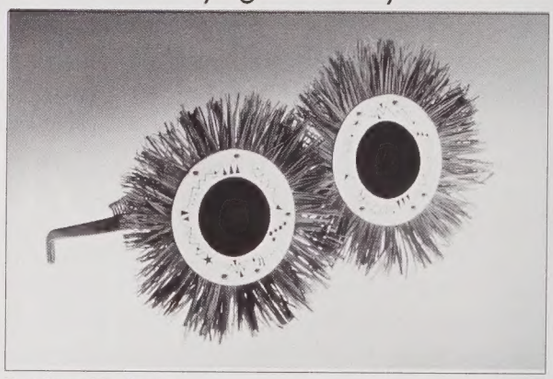

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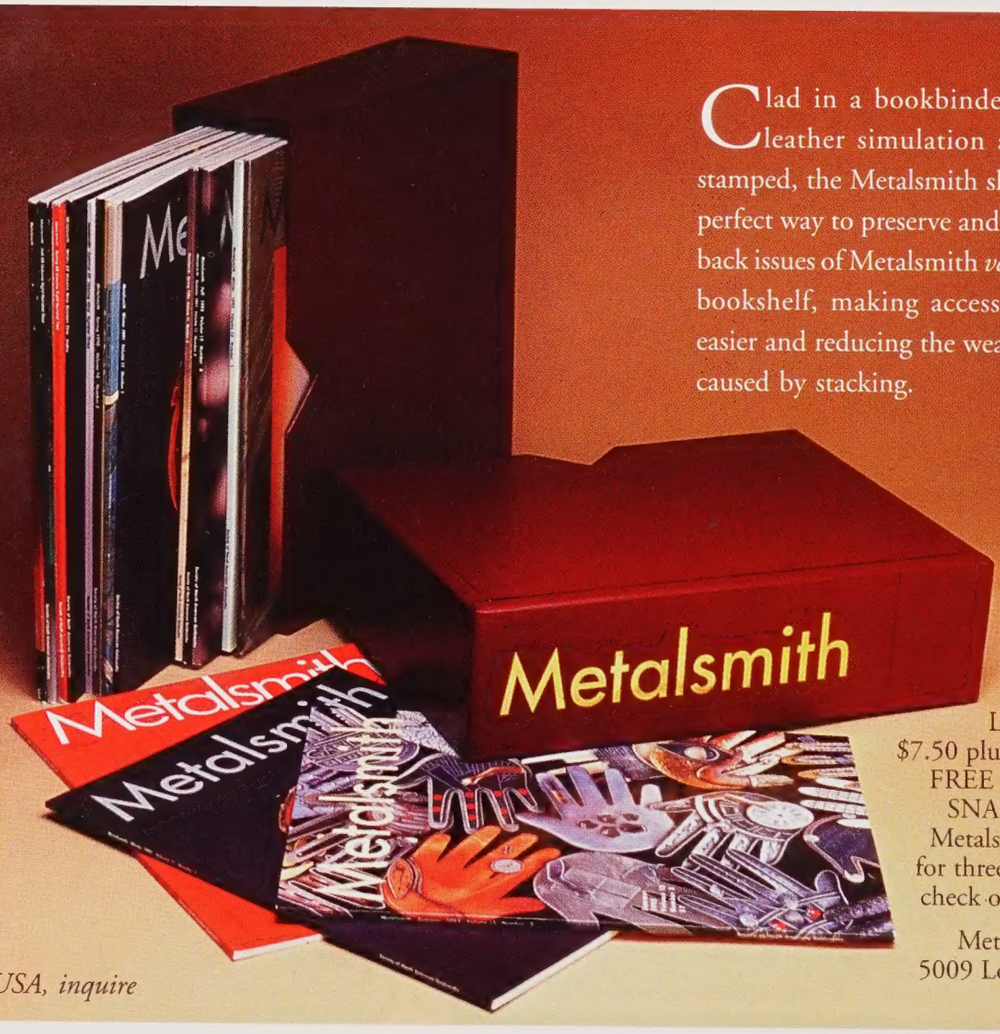

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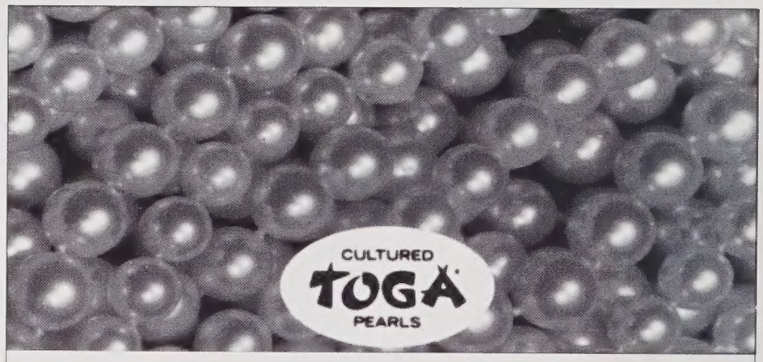

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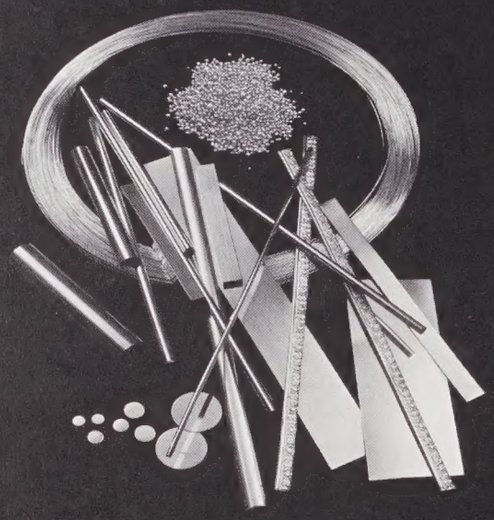

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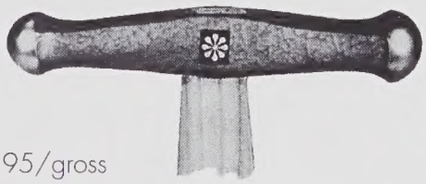

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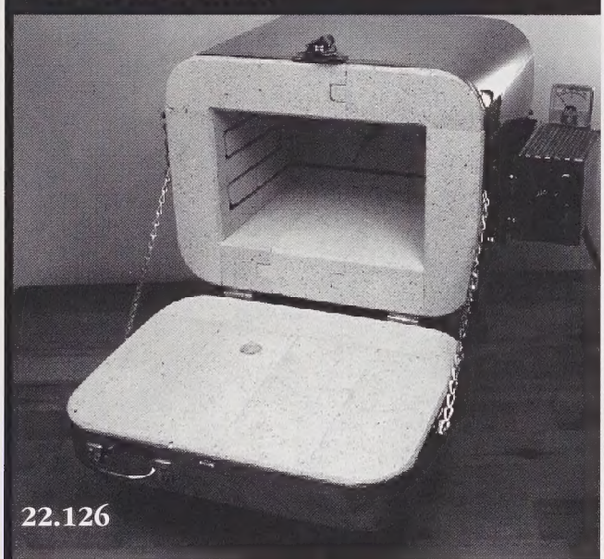

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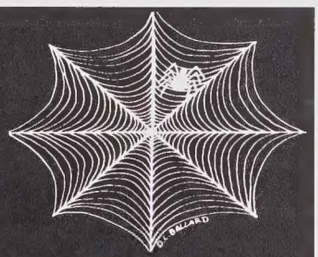

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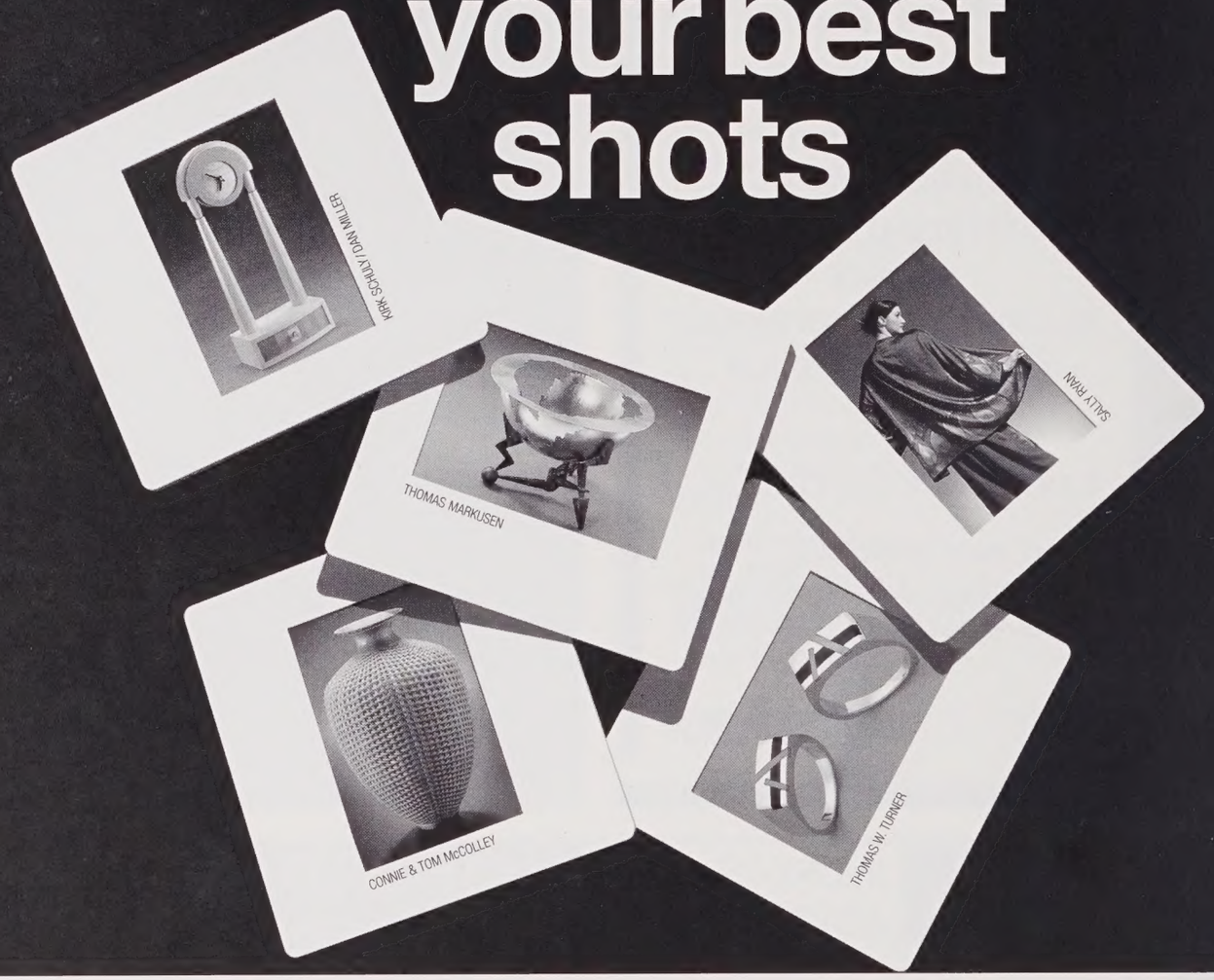

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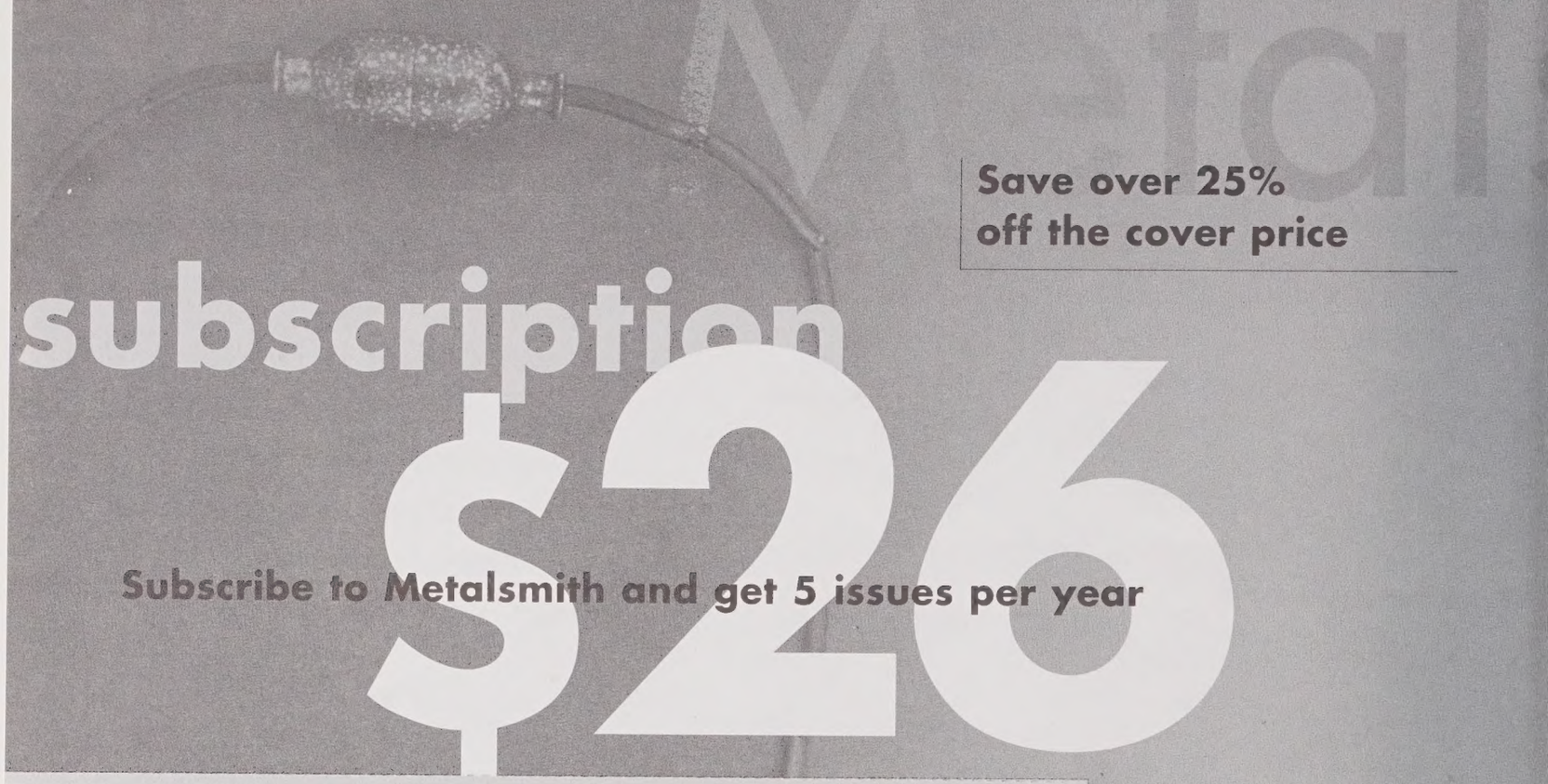

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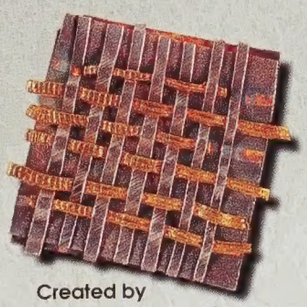
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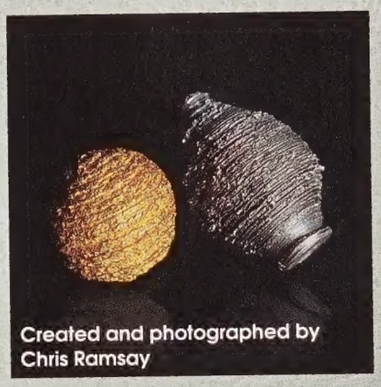
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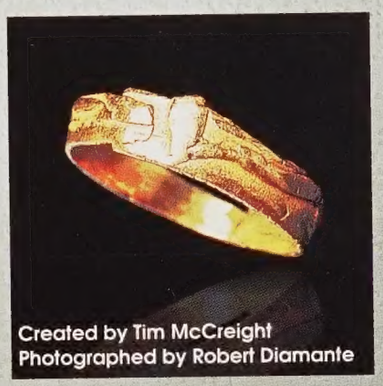
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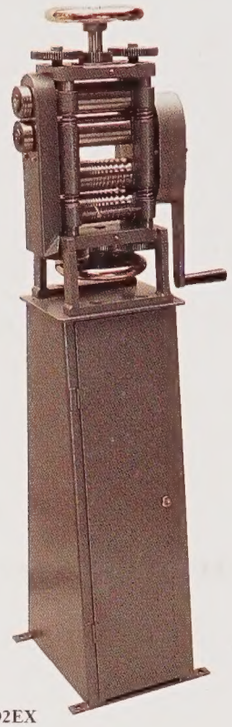

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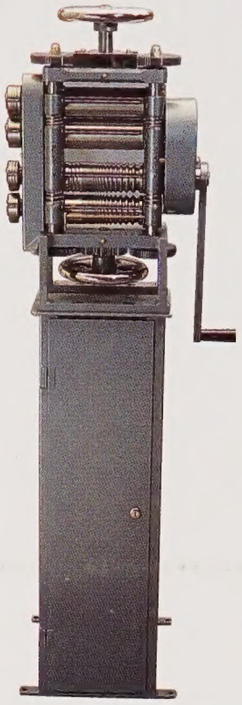

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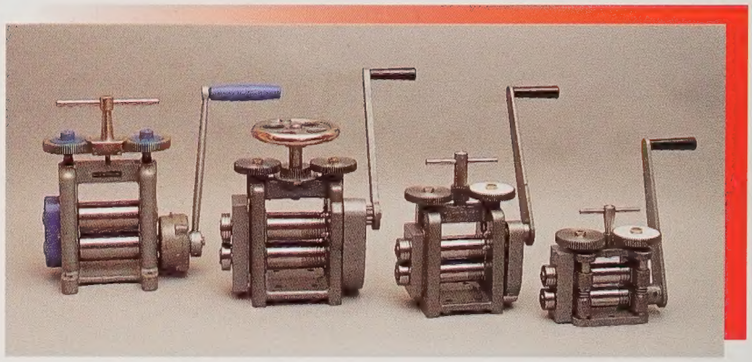

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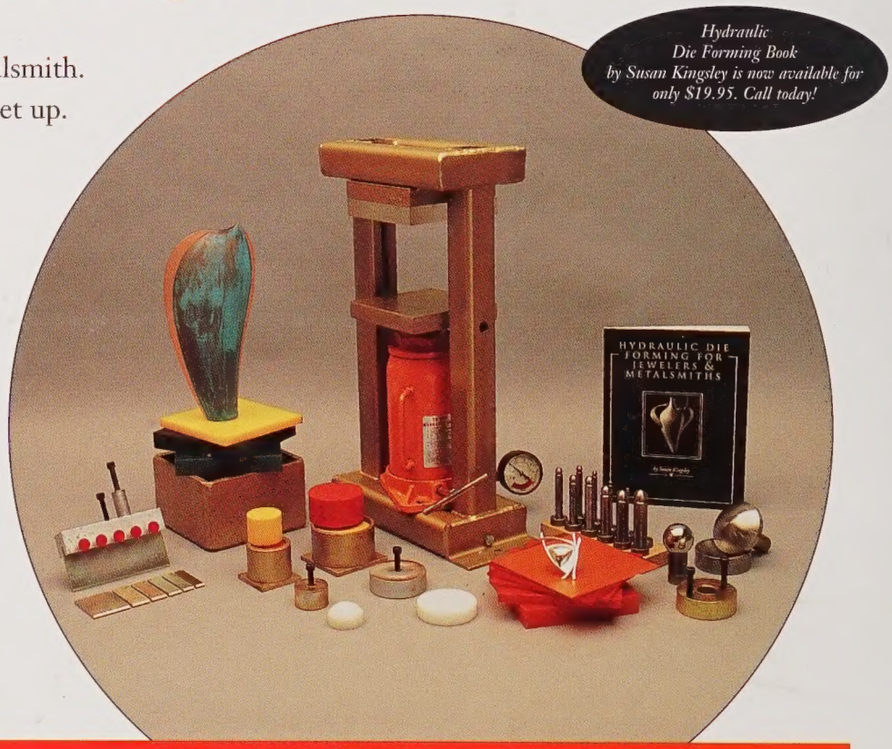
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